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**Leaching functions from the outer metropolitan zones  
(trade, services) – increasing peripherality  
of small towns and rural areas**

**Abstract**

Intensive spatial processes taking place around metropolitan areas leads to many economic, structural and social changes in their surroundings. The small towns and rural areas located in the outer zone of metropolitan areas are most affected by this functional changes. In the outer zone of a big urban canters appears a lot of new competing possibilities on the labor market and a comprehensive commercial, service and cultural offer to smaller centres. One of the most competitive advantage of the metropolitan zones becomes modern shopping centres being established in the most accessible places, providing a comprehensive shopping-services and even cultural-recreational offer.

**Keywords:** spatial processes, around metropolitan areas, small towns, rural areas, shopping centres, province of Silesia.

**JEL Classification:** R21, R58.

**Introduction**

Intensive spatial processes taking part in Poland in the vicinity of metropolitan zones and conurbations lead to numerous changes of functional, structural and social character. In the largest measure small towns and rural areas situated in outer metropolitan zones undergo these processes. Big, strong urban centres offering advantageous conditions on the labour market and a comprehensive commercial, service and cultural offer constitute competition to smaller centres whose offer does not meet residents' requirements. One of the elements

of competitive advantage of the metropolitan zones is modern shopping centres being established in communications convenient places, providing a comprehensive shopping-services and even cultural-recreational offer.

Direct research (2011) carried out in the Śląskie Voivodship (Poland) intended to recognize the influence of modern shopping centres on the functioning of small towns and rural areas situated in the outer metropolitan zone.

## **1. Shopping centres in the Śląskie Voivodship**

Śląskie Voivodship Province of Silesia is inhabited by almost 4.7 mln people, which constitutes 12.2% of the population of Poland, where 3.7 mln are residents of cities. The region is placed on the first place in Poland when it comes to the level of urbanization – 78.4% of urban population. It has also the highest population density – 377 people/km<sup>2</sup>, with the national average 123 people/km<sup>2</sup>. In the functional-spatial system in the province of Śląskie Voivodship four sub-regions can be distinguished (so-called development policy areas): northern (with the area of 3,050 km<sup>2</sup>), southern (2,354 km<sup>2</sup>), middle (called central), western (1,353 km<sup>2</sup>). The middle sub-region is the biggest one area-wise and most populated – 2835 thousand of inhabitants which is over 60% of the region population (Central Statistical Office, 2013), then the southern sub-region – 650 thousand people, western – 637 thousand people and northern with 533 thousand people of the province as residents (Central Statistical Office, 2013). The middle sub-region (also called the central one) is situated in the central part of the Śląskie Voivodship. It includes 14 cities with district (powiat) rights and 8 country districts. The area of the central sub-region is 5,577 km<sup>2</sup> and there are about 2.8 mln people living on its area, which constitutes about 60% of the population of the whole Śląskie Voivodship. The southern sub-region of the Śląskie Voivodship is situated in its southern region and occupies an area of 19% of the province surface area, and it is inhabited by 14% of the region population. This area is organized around Bielsko-Biała conurbation. The northern sub-region is situated to the north of the province, administrative structure of the sub-region consists of 31 communes, among which two most important ones are Częstochowa and Myszków urban communes. Over 50% of the sub-region population live in the urban communes, the remaining ones are 6 urban-rural communes and 23 rural communes. The area of the northern sub-region constitutes almost 25% of the Silesia Śląskie Voivodship. The western sub-region is situated in the south-western part of the Śląskie Voivodship. Rybnik is the main administrative-economic centre of the region. The surface area is 1,354 km<sup>2</sup> and population density 473 people per km<sup>2</sup>. In each of the sub-regions new generation shopping centres have been set up and are

operating which are located both in the centres and on the city outskirts, in the biggest cities and in smaller settlement units.

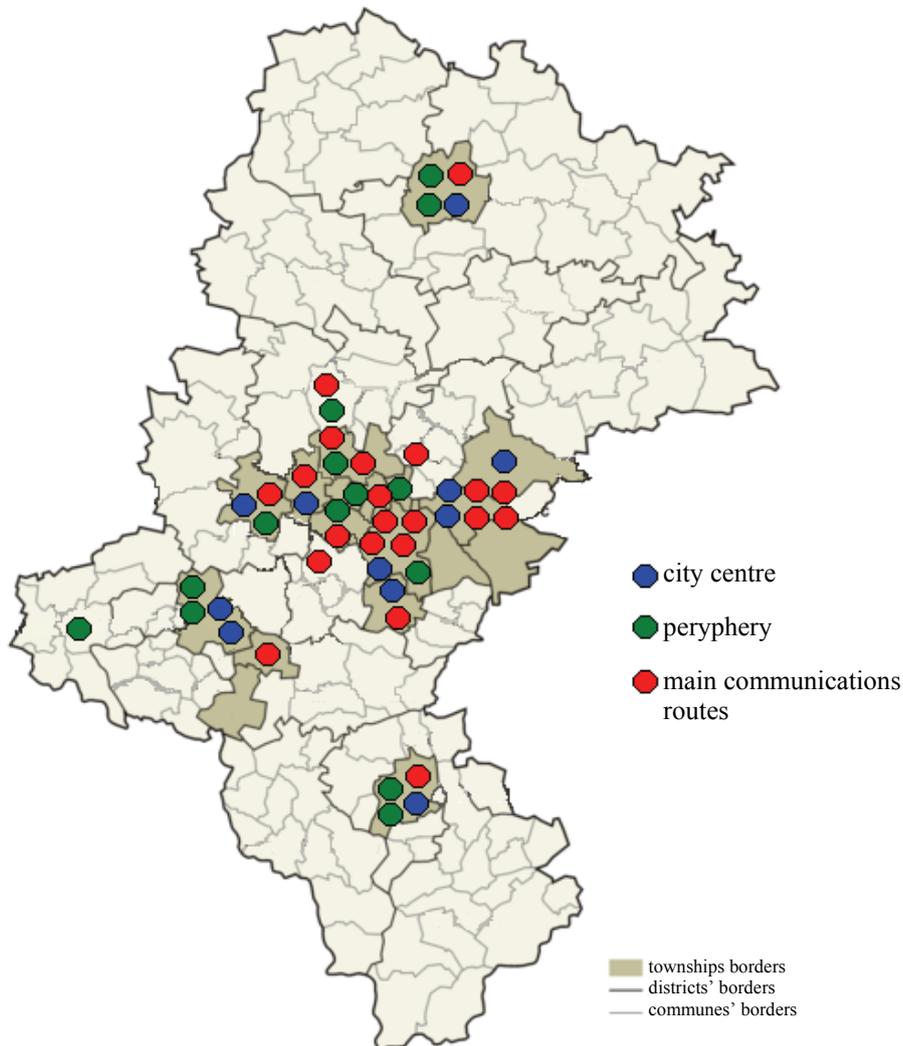
Over the last ten years, in the Śląskie Voivodship, there has been a dynamic development of shopping centres. In 1998-2004 such complexes were being built mainly in the biggest cities of the Upper Silesian Conurbation. Main reasons of such a location are most of all having a good communications network and a huge market (about 2.5 mln residents). In 2004-2007 there was a shift of investors' interest when it came to the location of shopping centres. Investors were beginning to notice purchasing power and market possibilities of other regions of the province and directed their investments to towns with a number of residents ranging between 100-200 thousand people. In subsequent years of 2008-2011 a process of the existing shopping centres' expansion into services, entertainment, sport, recreation, housing, office or hotel functions took place. New facilities, equipped with a diversified shopping-services offer have become a 'substitute for public space' in many cities of the region, especially the ones located in city centres (for example: Plaza Rybnik, Focus Mall Rybnik, Silesia City Center Katowice, Sfera Bielsko Biała).

In 2012 there were 52 shopping centres in the Śląskie Voivodship province of Silesia operating in 18 cities, with the total surface area of 1,324 m<sup>2</sup>. In comparison with 2001 when in the province of Śląskie Voivodship there were 25 shopping centres with the total surface area of 533.5 m<sup>2</sup> their number has increased by over 100% and retail surface area by 130%. In each sub-region of the province, usually in the biggest settlement centres, there are modern shopping centres, both in city centres and in the outskirts (Fig. 1). The present number of shopping centres in the Śląskie Voivodship constitutes 1/5 of all shopping centres situated on the area of Poland, and their total surface area constitutes 21.5% of their entire surface area.

In the initial period shopping centres development dynamics in the province of Silesia was the highest in Poland, in 1999 there were 33 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial area per one thousand of residents (country's average 31 m<sup>2</sup>), whereas in 2005 a triple increase of the rate was noted to the level of 94 m<sup>2</sup>. Presently, the surface area of shopping centres in the province of Silesia is 382 m<sup>2</sup> per 1,000 residents. At the end of the first half of 2012 the average rate of modern commercial space saturation for the whole country was 233 m<sup>2</sup>/ 1,000 citizens and increased slightly (by 4 m<sup>2</sup>) from the end of 2011. The average saturation rate for eight biggest conurbations in Poland is at present 527 m<sup>2</sup> / 1,000 residents (previously 520 m<sup>2</sup>)<sup>1</sup> – (Fig. 2). The average saturation rate for eight biggest conurbations in Poland / 1000 residents.

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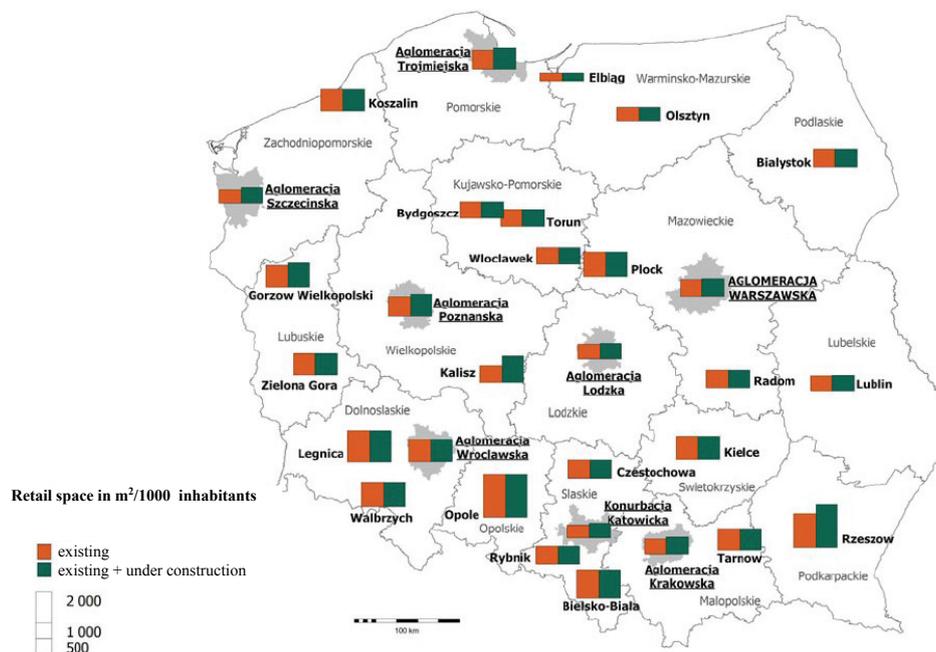
<sup>1</sup> For many years the leaders when it comes to saturation have been: Wrocław (729 m<sup>2</sup> – increase after setting up Galeria Sky Tower) and Poznań (649 m<sup>2</sup>). Still, Szczecińska Urbanized Area

**Figure 1.** Location of shopping centres in the Śląskie Voivodship

Source: Based on data from trade development reports 2006-2013.

and Katowicka Conurbation are unchangingly on the last places among the biggest urbanized areas. In the first half of 2012 the biggest increase of the commercial space rate per 1000 residents was in Wrocław. Poznań, Trójmiasto and Szczecin are urbanized areas in which at present the biggest activity of developers is observed. After commissioning of facilities, which are presently under construction, the saturation rate will go up by about 70m<sup>2</sup> in each of the cities. An increase of the rate by about 60 m<sup>2</sup> will be brought by accomplishment of new facilities in Kraków and Katowice. also bigger construction activity. The average saturation of modern commercial space among 15 cities with 100,000-200,000 people has increased slightly to 745 m<sup>2</sup> / 1,000 of residents (see: PRCH Retail Research Forum 2012).

**Figure 2.** Density of retail space in cities with population above 100,000 inhabitants (m<sup>2</sup>/1,000 inhabitants)



Źródło: PRCH Retail Research Forum (2012).

The most modern shopping centres in Poland, with diversified architecture, range of products and services offered, equipped with non-commercial functions, located in city centres, residential districts, on the outskirts and near main communications routes operate in the biggest cities of Silesian sub-regions. All of these facilities make a new space of cities and new market conditions, both for the residents as well as local entrepreneurs. Results of their functioning should be examined in economic, social, spatial and environmental sphere.

They are fulfilling an increasing number of functions, that is services, entertainment, recreational, cultural, integrating, socializing, housing, administrative, educational as well as religious (Mańkowska-Dudek 2006). There are restaurants, cafés and bars, hairdressing salons, banks, photo centres, travelling agencies, dry cleaners, duplicate keys service point, florists, hospitals, universities, schools and kindergartens in the new shopping centres<sup>2</sup>. They have miniature funfairs, multiplexes and discos, clients can use pitches, ice-skating rinks, skate-parks, fitness clubs and bowling alleys and even take part in exhibitions, performances, concerts, meetings with artists. Modern facilities are becoming city

<sup>2</sup> Like Enel Med. in Blue City and Arkadia in Warsaw.

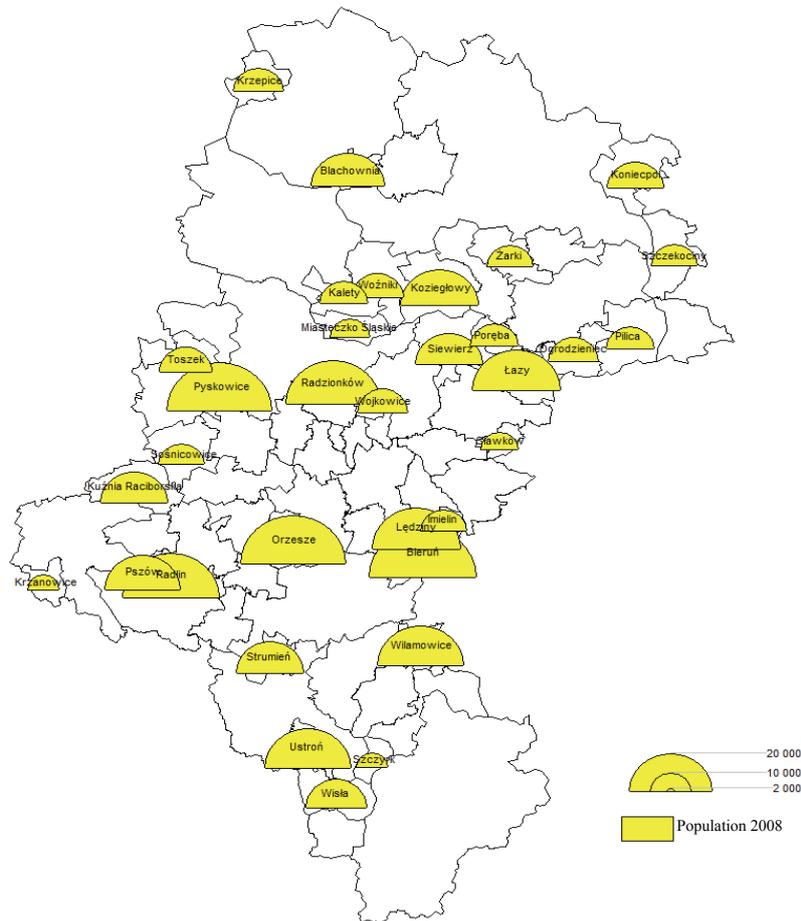
miniatures, therefore alleys refer to city covered passage ways, there are small squares in central points fulfilling functions similar to the function of town markets. As in cities, there are elements of landscape architecture. More and more often we can see further functions appearing around the centre, deemed as 'centre-forming' by urban planners (Mańkowska-Dudek 2006).

Shopping centres located in big and medium-size cities of the Śląskie Voivodship serve clients from the area of up to 120 km from their place of residence, which proves their over-regional influence. Taking into account their number, offer and location it can be assumed that they have a significant influence on the development and functioning of small towns and rural areas in the outer metropolitan zones.

## **2. Small towns and rural areas in the outer metropolitan zones in the Śląskie Voivodship**

In the Śląskie Voivodship there are presently 33 small towns (Fig. 3), which in substantial majority are located in the outer metropolitan zone. Usually, a traditional function of small towns was servicing farming and rural population connected with it directly or indirectly. This relation has changed in the process of social-economic development when small towns were gradually acquiring 'additional' functions, supplementing or substituting former market functions. In many small centres, non-agricultural town functions have dominated their original structure making them mono-functional (including by housing functions), connected with other sectors of town economy. Some authors (Szymła 2000; Marszałkowska 2001; Heffner 2003) suggest that in the future the housing function may become one of the development paths of small towns, however, only in case of maintaining general, positive tendencies of economic development, yet they include for example cities dominated by big traditional industry plants threatened with recession and decline, city centres with underdeveloped infrastructural facilities and low level of services for people as well unfavorable environment for the local enterprise, centres with no or vanishing economic network connections, and also with a low quality of human resources. They also include cities located in the outer metropolitan zone, with strong functional connections with the metropolitan zone (labor market, service and cultural offer).

**Figure 3.** Small towns in the Śląskie Voivodship according to the population (in 2008)



Small towns fulfil numerous diversified functions, depending on their location (distance) towards other urban centres or metropolitan zones, these are administrative, commercial, industrial, tourist, recreational, etc. functions. Taking into account the specificity of small towns in the Śląskie Voivodship we can divide them into a number of functional sub-sets, namely:

- towns located on the outskirts of metropolitan zones;
- connected by functional relations with the centre of the metropolitan zone;
- towns with specialized functions, which can include:
  - industrial towns – based on one or a few industrial plants,
  - ‘communications’ towns – junction points, interchanges,
  - spas and recreation centres (for example Ustroń, Wisła);
- towns with the majority of service functions:

- local with the seat of communes of town-communes (small commercial services and basic local services centres);
- supra-local, fulfilling mainly public services (from the area of public administration, public order services, in the area of health care, education and social care) resulting from the location of the commune's seat in them (Stasiak, Bolesta 2005/2006).

Small towns in the Śląskie Voivodship serving supra-local functions are usually not prepared to serve them. According to the theory of central units these towns 'are forced' to fulfil the roles since in a suitable spatial availability of a given area there is no bigger town which could take over these functions. Therefore, it can be deemed that they fill a gap in a settlement system. As a consequence, it is connected with the need of social infrastructure development, which will undoubtedly have a positive influence on the town's development as well as the level of satisfying the needs of people living within the range of its influence. Modern development of small Polish towns, both in economic as well as social sphere is determined by two processes:

- social-economic transformation process, expressed in introducing market economy rules,
- external opening of the towns and their economies to the influences of new development tendencies of technical-organizational innovations and foreign capital.

In new social-economic conditions many small urban centres undertake an attempt to re-define their role and place in the spatial structure of the region, looking for new impulses of development and a chance to improve life conditions of local communities. Towns which undertake such attempts are also the small towns in the Śląskie Voivodship.

Small towns in the Śląskie Voivodship are most of all industrial towns, in vast majority connected with coal mining industry. Towns located within the range of the metropolitan zone influence were subject of a detailed analysis. There are 5 small towns within the range of the influence of Katowice: Radzionków and Wojkowice located in the northern part of Upper Silesian conurbation, Imielin and Lędziny in the south-eastern part and Orzesze in the south-western part, in the area of the influence of Gliwice-Pyskowice and Sośnicowice. All these centres have industrial genesis. As a result of a transformation process only one of the towns (Lędziny) has maintained this function, other centres have been subject to structural-functional transformations. The towns have from 7.5-18.5 thousand residents and presently they are providing services. In each of the towns a particular function is played by trade (especially retailing), called a town-forming factor, connected with the town then and now. Trade and the town remain in a relationship, based on complex and multilevel dependencies. Trade is

considered as one of the most important determinant of towns' growth and transformation, whereas – changes in rendering trade services techniques as well as trade network distribution – are a result of urbanization processes and transformations in economic and social structure (Twardzik 2009: 113).

**Figure 4.** Rural areas in the Śląskie Voivodship



Source: Plan Zagospodarowania Przestrzennego Województwa Śląskiego.

Small towns in the outer area of the metropolitan zone in the Śląskie Voivodship have an important function of trade-services servicing of residents of rural areas located within the range of their influence. Agriculture and rural areas in the Śląskie Voivodship (Fig. 4) are a significant element of the region's economy. Agricultural lands constitute 39.2% of the total area of the province. There are about 102.1 thousand farms on the area of 483.1 thousand ha. Over 82% of them are small farms whose area does not exceed 5 ha. In rural areas of the Śląskie Voivodship there are 994.8 thousand people, which constitutes about 21.1% of the population of the region, however, a positive migration balance to rural areas has been observed for a few years. Residents of cities move willingly to sub-city and rural areas, usually in the closest vicinity of the metropolitan zone, viewing in this better life conditions, peace as well as comfort. Living outside the city, they carry out the majority of the activity, that is work, shopping, entertainment in the city, and as a consequence their place of residence becomes just their "sleeping room", and areas of small towns and countryside – a mono-functional – residential place.

Therefore, the metropolitan zone influences development of units located in its vicinity, especially small towns and rural areas. This influence is mainly of utilization nature and is reflected in leaching the trade-services functions from these areas, depriving them of development potential. Areas in the outer region of metropolitan zone remain mono-functional, housing, dehierarchized and decentralized.

### **3. Influence of shopping centres located in the metropolitan zone on small towns and rural areas surrounding it – research results**

In 2011 direct research was carried out among entrepreneurs in selected small towns and rural areas located in the outer Upper Silesia Metropolitan Zone and areas of influence of Bielsko-Biała, Rybnik and Częstochowa.

The aim of research was recognizing consequences of the shopping centres functioning in the Śląskie Voivodship with special emphasis on their influence on small towns and rural areas situated in selected locations.

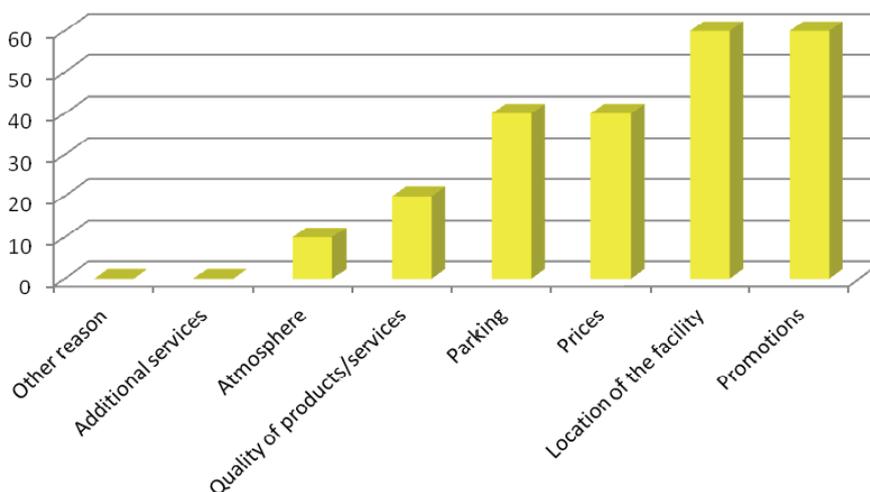
Shopping centres, by offering a comprehensive offer to demanding clients constitute the biggest competition for entrepreneurs carrying out trade-services activity. 200 enterprises took part in the discovery sample. Over 65% of them were companies with retailing profile of operation, 20% – eating places, only 5% of the discovery sample are entertainment establishments and the remaining 10% are other profiles of operation – mainly specialist services. The majority of enterprises are small companies, that is why 80% of them operate only locally,

few – 15% function on the supra-local market. Over 90% of the examined companies employ fewer than 10 workers. Almost 40% of the examined companies have been present on the market for over 10 years, 35% of enterprises has not been functioning for 5 years. Economic situation of the enterprises is diversified, 45% company owners describe it as average, 30% as good and 25% as bad.

Entrepreneurs have indicated positive and negative changes in towns as a result of establishing and operation of shopping centres in metropolitan zones. They indicated complementing trade-services offer, new work places, prestige or access to modern trade, increase of the number of clients as positive. 17% of the examined express positive opinion, whereas in negative changes they included: high competition, decrease of revenues, worsening of economic situation, increasing standards of services and new technologies used in the client's service – 78%. Other examined expressed neutral opinions. Positive opinions were expressed mostly by entrepreneurs carrying out their operation in the area of Bielsko-Biała and Upper Silesia Metropolitan Zone. Negative opinions – entrepreneurs carrying out their operation in the area of influence of Rybnik and Częstochowa.

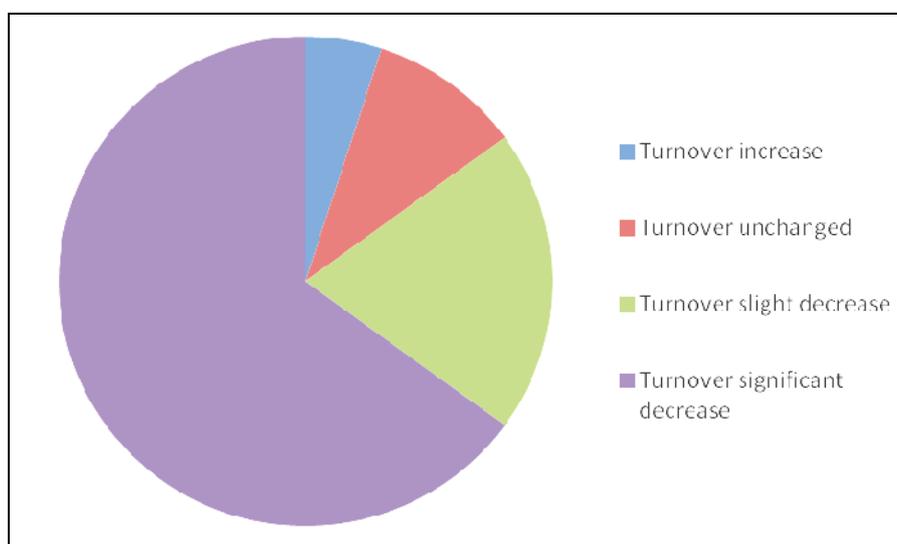
According to entrepreneurs, factors which have the biggest influence on the power and way of influence of a given shopping centre on the outer metropolitan zone are: location of the facilities and offered promotions – 60%, as well as level prices and availability of parking – 40% (Fig. 5). According to the entrepreneurs, the centre's atmosphere (10%) and additional services have the least significant meaning.

**Figure 5.** Factors which have an effect on the way of shopping centres' influence on the outer metropolitan zone (in %)



The entrepreneurs taking part in the study declare, that once the shopping centres were established ‘nearby’ their company revenues have dropped significantly (65% of respondents) and the company economic situation has worsened – 60%. About 20% of the examined noted an insignificant decrease of turnover in the last two years. For 10% of the companies economic situation has remained the same, turnover has been on the same level. A small percentage of respondents (5%) noticed an increase of revenues, which is worth emphasising, these companies have not been carrying out a typically commercial activity, but rather specialist services (Fig. 6). Among entrepreneurs declaring a significant decrease of turnover and worsening of economic situation the biggest group is constituted by entities carrying out commercial operation in the outer area of Upper Silesian Conurbation and in the area of Rybnik influence.

**Figure 6.** Influence of shopping centre on the functioning of companies in the outer metropolitan zone (%)

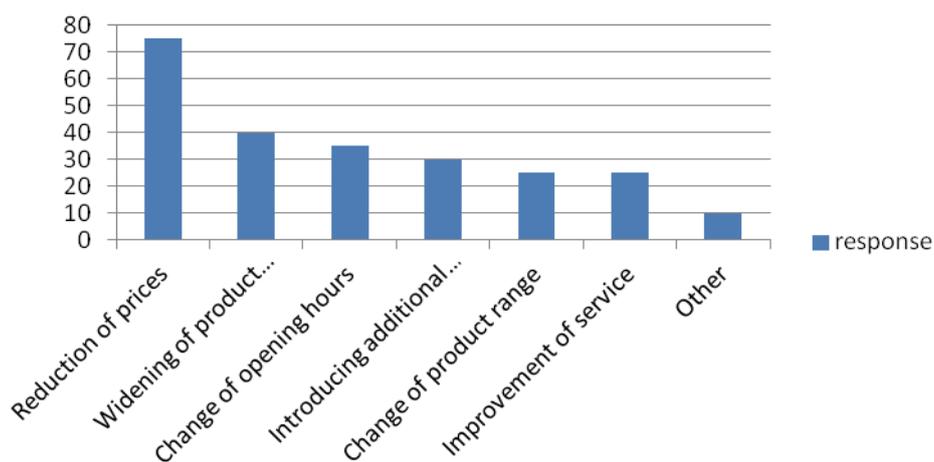


An important issue of the research was also to show whether there is a possibility of functioning of small enterprises in a close vicinity of shopping centres. Entrepreneurs examined feel decidedly that there is not possibility of small companies operations in the vicinity of big commercial entities (65%), the remaining group can see such possibilities even viewing benefits of a prestigious competitor’s neighbourhood. Many respondents emphasized that they are waiting for local authorities’ help in the area of financial concessions or some protection of local market and entities operating on it.

Entrepreneurs also expressed their opinions concerning the situation connected with functioning of modern forms of trade, especially shopping centres, in their close neighbourhood. Over 75% of the surveyed agree definitely that location is the most important factor determining functioning of commercial operation. Almost 55% of the examined strongly agree with the popular opinion that big commercial facilities contribute to a decline of small trade and services enterprises, exposed to uneven competition. Among the respondents, 60% of them think that setting up a big number of large-format facilities (including shopping centres) should be limited in cities, whereas for 10% of the examined there is no problem in this respect. The majority of the examined (80%) definitely support the idea that local authorities should promote small enterprise in settlement units more.

Modern shopping centres in selected cities of the province have a strong influence on the functioning of small companies located in its outer zones. Over 75% of the respondents admit that they were forced to lower the prices of products and services offered in connection with setting up modern shopping centres in the city (the area of the influence of Rybnik, Upper Silesian Conurbation and Bielsko-Biała). 40% of the companies widened their product range, whereas 35% changed opening hours of the enterprise or introduced additional services – 30%. Among other changes in the company the examined underlined that they had been forced to lay off their employees. One of the companies switched its product range to only Polish, high-quality products hoping that the quality of goods will attract customers and consequently the enterprise will stay on the market (Fig. 7).

**Figure 7.** Influence of shopping centres on the functioning of small companies in the outer metropolitan zone (%)



The surveyed also pointed out some benefits for small towns and rural areas located in the outer area of the metropolitan zone from the establishing and operating of shopping centres. They listed here most of all the possibility of employment (11%) and a growing number of clients (6%). A straight majority points out a negative effect of modern shopping centres on the conditions of local market functioning. The surveyed emphasize an increase of the number of liquidated companies (14% of companies declared bankrupt in the last 3 years), due to the lack of possibility to compete on the market, decrease of turnover (64%), uncertain future, employing workers on the basis of part-time contracts (22%) and losing wealthier clients (21%), who prefer shopping in modern facilities. Small towns and rural areas are becoming merely a place for 'comfortable living', basic, everyday shopping (food) and obligatory services (primary-level education). The residents carry out all other economic and social needs in cities, more and more often in multi-functional shopping centres.

## **Conclusions**

Shopping centres operating on the area of the province of Śląskie Voivodship have a significant influence on settlement units situated in the outer area of influence of a given city or metropolitan zone. The effects of setting up modern forms of commerce are most felt by entrepreneurs carrying out their trade-service activity in small towns and on rural areas. Negative effects include a decrease of companies' turnover, and as a consequence – worsening economic situation, companies' collapse, decrease of the number of clients and increasing competition. Among entrepreneurs declaring a significant decrease of turnover and worsening of the economic situation the biggest group is constituted by entities carrying out their activity in the outer Upper Silesian Metropolitan zone and in the area of influence of Rybnik. The entrepreneurs admit that they were forced to lower the prices of offered products and services, expand or change the offered product range or also change the enterprise opening hours. They point out the need to lay off employees and anxiety about uncertain future as acute changes in the company (Twardzik 2013).

It can therefore be stated that shopping centres in the province of Śląskie Voivodship have a rather negative impact on the development of regions situated in the outer metropolitan zone, they are a destimulant to development of small towns and rural areas situated in the area of their influence, they cause a collapse of small companies, their financial draining, concerns about the growing competition or losing clients.

As in other parts of Europe, small towns and other local centres in the rural areas so far fulfilling housing functions (commuting) as well as local trade and service functions are systematically losing their importance in the area of commercial service of residents. Their demand potential is largely taken over by shopping centres located in the outer metropolitan zone. As has been shown by research results the biggest changes are taking place within economic structure of small settlement units, where the leaching of trade-services function is most significant. 'Outflow' of central functions results in peripherality of small centres and losing local connections. Urban centres, located in the outer area, are becoming mono-functional – housing. The changes take place both in the spatial structure (architecture, communications, spatial development) as well as in social-economic structure (labour market, economy). The main change is connected with disappearance of traditional bases of functioning of small towns, including the former trade-services functions carried out towards rural areas in the surroundings of conurbations. It has been proven by research that structural changes taking place in outer metropolitan zones in Poland require taking action within urban and regional policy and the choice of location of new shopping centres investments should be an element of development strategy of small towns and rural areas situated in these zones.

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