

**LEADER
and Community-Led
Local Development
Approach
Polish Experiences**



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LEADER and Community-Led Local Development Approach Polish Experiences

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INTRODUCTION

The LEADER approach implemented in rural areas of the European Union since 1991 has for many years unchangeably been the subject of interest of many researchers such as sociologists, political scientists, geographers, and economists. Extensive source literature points to its advantages but also to its weak sides and drawbacks. The formation and functioning of local action groups illustrates the complex relations between the main social actors responsible for the development of contemporary rural and – since the beginning of implementation of Community-Led Local Development – also urban areas.

Due to specificity and size of the country, Poland seems to be especially legitimate to analyze the LEADER approach and Community-Led Local Development. This publication analyzes these issues from the perspective of researchers from three scientific centers (the University of Łódź, the University of Rzeszów, and the Urban Development Institute (IRM) in Kraków, representing different scientific areas: sociology, political science, and geography. The subject of the study is the connection of the mentioned experiences and the practices of the LEADER approach implementation (mostly in the field of social participation and implementation of social innovations) and the possible application of Community-Led Local Development that is based on the LEADER's principles.

This publication presents an overview of selected solutions for the implementation of the LEADER approach, with particular emphasis on the elements that coincide with the Community-Led Local Development concept. The authors point to the role of mechanisms based on the partnership structure, which may be crucial for the development of territorial units in the future. It mainly includes theoretical analyses based on existing literature and the experience of the authors associated with results of empirical research carried out in different regions of Poland. The publication also presents empirical findings related to social innovations implemented by local action groups.

The publication is composed of four chapters. The first, an introductory one, discusses the theoretical background of the transformation of rural areas development policy, and presents the essence and the key characteristics of the LEADER approach, its origin, and different models of its implementation in European countries.

The second chapter concentrates on the participation principle, perceived as a one of the most important principles of territorial development. The authors assume that the common understanding of participation is too simplified, and it is

not enough to just could be applied in order to engage citizens and representatives of the social sector in decision making processes, especially that residents (both in rural and urban areas) may be engaged in local development to very different dimensions and in diverse manners. Wide participation is not always more effective. The final assessment of the importance of participation depends on the adapted meaning of participation, context of undertaken actions, stakeholders involved in the process of participation as well as purpose of taken actions. It depends on the key actors responsible for its implementation and setting up targets. A theoretical framework of participation is applied in the assessment of the implementation of the LEADER approach from the perspective of relationships between the representatives of the three sectors that form local action groups.

In the third chapter Katarzyna Zajda evaluates the previous activity of selected local action groups formed in Poland in the context of implementing the innovation principle. In this chapter she presents different definitions of social innovations. She also describes the effects of research carried out in a purposely selected province, concerning the activity of local action groups involving the implementation of such innovations.

In chapter four Anna Kołomycew discusses the issue of Community-Led Local Development approach, which is a new instrument in Poland implemented in the 2014–2020 programming period, based on the experiences of the LEADER approach but also applied in urban areas. She deliberates on the possibility of implementing its principles both in the context of experiences of the LEADER approach and the specificity of urban areas, especially concerning the functioning of urban partnerships. This part of the work presents the origin of local partnerships formed in towns whose tradition goes back to the 1970s and is related to the development of an urban governance system. On the basis of the identified cases of urban partnerships she points to the barriers and limitations of a such instrument that may affect the way of implementing Community-Led Local Development in Polish urban areas.

The book concludes with a summary in which the authors drew attention to the change of the image of the LEADER approach in Poland, which has occurred over the years, identified some superficial activities that took place as part of its implementation, discuss the problems of enforcing the bottom up and innovative approach (in the context of social innovations implementation). The authors also highlight the main barriers to implementing Community-Led Local Development in rural and urban areas.

The authors hope that the presented publication will attract foreign readers (also non-academic readers) who are interested in the experiences of implementing the LEADER approach in Poland, and thus in the determinants of implementing Community-Led Local Development, not only in rural areas. The authors hope it will also be useful for practitioners. Certainly it does not exhaust the topic and should be treated as a contribution to further academic debate, in-depth research in this field, and wider public discussion.

Chapter 1

THE LEADER APPROACH IN EUROPE

1.1. Theoretical basis for rural development policy

The LEADER program and its fundamental characteristics and implementation methods cannot be analyzed separately from an assessment of the changes in theoretical approaches to rural development. These changes, and in particular the transition from the concept of exogenous development to the concept of endogenous development, have had immense practical implications, as they affected shifts in rural development policy implemented in Europe after World War II.

The exogenous (externally driven) model of development served as a dominant model of development for rural areas in Europe until the late 1970s. External factors were accorded a substantial amount of significance in this particular approach to rural development. Impulses for development were viewed as originating in urban centers (Tab. 1). This development model treated cities as “centers of growth” that stimulate economic development in surrounding rural areas. At the same time, rural areas were viewed as “lagging areas,” which remain behind large urban centers in terms of technological, economic, and cultural activity. The exogenous model of development reduced the function of rural areas largely to the production and delivery of food and other basic products to growing urban areas. This context suggests that low productivity and peripheral location are the main barriers to the development of rural areas (Baldock et al. 2001, Ward et al. 2005). The exogenous development model was reflected in the rural development policy implemented at the time in many European countries whose primary purpose was modernization of the agricultural sector (Terluin 2003).

The assumptions behind the exogenous model were systematically (strongly) criticized beginning in the late 1970s. The first criticism was that it is a model of dependence that requires constant subsidies and the external decisions of experts and planners. In addition, it was argued that this approach supports only certain sectors and selected forms of economic activity, while neglecting non-economic areas of rural life. Finally, it was argued that the assumptions behind this approach ignore environmental differences and cultural differences between different rural areas (Ward et al. 2005). Given the increasingly strong criticism of

Tab. 1. Approaches to rural development

Characteristic	Exogenous development	Endogenous development	Neo-endogenous development
Key determinants	Economies of scale and concentration	Employing local resources (natural, human, and capital)	The interaction between local and global forces
Dynamic force	Urban growth poles (drivers exogenous to rural areas)	Local initiative and enterprise	Globalisation, rapid technological change in communications and information
Functions of rural areas	Food and primary products for expanding urban economies	Diverse service economies	Dynamic participation of local actors in local and external networks and development processes
Major rural development issues	Peripherality and low productivity	Limited capacity of areas / groups to participate in economic activity	Resource allocation and competitiveness in a global environment
Focus on rural development	Agriculture modernisation; encourage labour and capital mobility	Capacity building (skills, institutions, infrastructure); overcoming exclusion	Enhancing local capacity and actors participation to direct local and external forces to their benefit
Criticism	Dependent, distorted, destructive, and dictated development	Not practical in contemporary Europe	Operates at a level of insufficient empirical evidence

Source: Buchenrieder et al. 2007, p. 62.

the exogenous approach, a gradual transition to the endogenous model of rural development occurred in the early 1980s. However, it is important to note that criticism of the exogenous model was not the only reason for the emergence of the endogenous model.

The research literature (Baldock et al. 2001) suggests four other reasons for the birth of this new rural development model. The first reason was a discussion of success factors in rural areas, which were able to attain a rapid rate of economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. the so-called Third Italy). The second reason was the work of so-called development agencies that pursued efforts to overcome earlier failures of rural development policy by promoting various forms of local development that relied less on external funding. This approach included a diversification of the rural economy along with support for local businesses and stimulation of local initiatives and local entrepreneurship. The third reason was a discussion of sustainable development in rural areas. Finally, the fourth reason was the concept of self-reliance, promoted largely by activists working with marginalized social groups (Baldock et al. 2001).

The fundamental idea behind endogenous development is that specific local resources (environment, people, culture) hold the key to sustainable development in rural areas (Baldock et al. 2001, Ward et al. 2005). This approach recognizes the most important driving force behind rural development to be local initiatives and local entrepreneurship¹. Unlike the sector-oriented exogenous approach, it focuses on diversification and multi-functionality in rural areas. In this model, the main barriers to development in rural areas include their limited ability to participate more broadly in various economic processes. In this context, the endogenous approach serves rural development policy by moving to mobilize local resources in order to generate potential in rural areas (economic growth, social growth) and counteract rural marginalization (Ward et al. 2005)².

British researchers working on themes in rural development in the late 1990s formulated a new theoretical approach designed to help explain rural area development in the form of neo-endogenous development. This term was proposed by Christopher Ray (2001) to characterize the process of economic development based on internal potential as well as the recognition that external factors are essential. The belief that local communities possess the potential to generate their own future is a very important part of this approach³ (Ray 2001).

¹ It should be emphasized that the importance of the active role of local communities in the process of rural development has already been highlighted within the concept of “community development”, which was born in the United States in the 1930s. In Poland the assumptions of this concept (translated as “activation and development of local communities”) were presented and popularized in the work “Socjologia wsi w Stanach Zjednoczonych” by Alvin L. Bertrand and Zbigniew T. Wierzbicki, published in 1970 (Kaleta 2007).

² In practical terms, the transition from the exogenous to the endogenous model of rural development is reflected, for example, in the change in approach to the village renewal process, which is a method of supporting local development complementary to the LEADER program (Błąd 2007, Kamiński 2007). Village renewal was initiated in the 1950s in West Germany. In its initial phase (referred to as modernization) it included primarily urban renewal and the renewal of agriculture. The measures taken at that time focused mainly on improving the productivity of agriculture (e.g. by land consolidation) and on modernizing rural areas, aimed at making them more urban. This approach had a number of negative consequences for rural areas, such as the disappearance of traditional rural buildings or the weakening of the rural social fabric. Awareness of the negative effects of rural modernization resulted in changes in the process of village renewal. Since the late 1970s, attention has been paid to the non-agricultural aspects of rural development, including the creation of alternative jobs. Although a significant element of rural renewal continued to be the expansion of rural infrastructure, these activities were carried out with greater respect for tradition, as can be seen in the renovation of the traditional facades of rural buildings. In the 1980s, the idea of rural renewal was adopted in Austria, where more and more emphasis gradually began to be placed on the social and spiritual aspects of this process (Idziak, Wilczyński 2013).

³ One of the fundamental ideas behind the neo-endogenous approach to development consists of the belief that rural areas experiencing hardship can take action to help themselves. In addition, historical issues and globalization are not to be perceived as intrinsically harmful and destined to marginalize or hurt rural communities (Ray 2001).

The theory of neo-endogenous rural development was formulated as a result of criticism directed at both the exogenous approach and the endogenous approach (Bosworth and Atterton 2012). Critics of the endogenous development approach (e.g. Ray 2001) noted that – in modern Europe – rural development completely free of external impacts is impossible in the real world (Ward et al. 2005). In addition, the endogenous approach assumes that rural areas function in a broader political, institutional, and economic context, which directly affects various processes occurring in rural areas (Michalewska-Pawlak 2013). Hence, this development approach needs to be based on a combination of factors, internal forces, and external forces, and should assume a number of interactions between the local level and the regional, or even a higher, level. The primary issue in this approach to rural development is represented by the following question: How can local communities be supported in order to be able to manage broader processes, resources, and actions designed to generate local benefits? (Ward et al. 2005).

The neo-endogenous approach assumes that a development process based on local resources and community participation can be stimulated by three different actors at the same time or independently of each other: (1) local (rural) actors, (2) outside actors such as national governments or international organizations, (3) mid-level actors such as local non-governmental organizations supported by various external entities (Ray 2001).

The concept of neo-endogenous development manifests itself in the form of an attempt to combine two previous rural development models, which used to be presented as opposite to one another. This new approach assumes that the local development process ought to be based first and foremost on internal potential, the resources characteristic of a given geographic area, and the participation of local stakeholders. Furthermore, this theory assumes that local development ought to involve the acquisition of internal resources and the utilization of development triggers impacting rural areas from the outside. However, the neo-endogenous model also assumes that external resources utilized in the process of rural development ought to be used consistently with local needs (Michalewska-Pawlak 2013).

The theory behind the endogenous approach is firmly rooted in institutional theories of development, which emphasize the idea that local development can be assisted by building and strengthening local institutions capable of mobilizing internal (local) resources and responding to external forces impacting their area of jurisdiction. In this context, one of the main aims of the neo-endogenous approach in rural development is the strengthening of both human capital and social capital (Ward et al. 2005).

The LEADER approach and its primary aims and principles fit the assumptions behind the neo-endogenous model of rural development. It is an approach that assumes that the process of rural development ought to be based first and

foremost on the internal potential of an area or the use of local resources and the pursuit of local initiatives. However, the LEADER approach is not merely a grass-roots strategy. The first point to note is that the most important principles of the approach and the means for its implementation are defined at the European Union level. At the same time, while the LEADER implementation system includes local actors, it also includes public officials at various levels of government (European Union, national, regional). Furthermore, this approach assumes the entry of local communities into various relationships with their external environment through regional or higher collaboration and the establishment of networks. Finally, external development drivers such as financial support are very important in the practical implementation of the LEADER approach. Financial support is provided by the European Union.

The development paradigm for rural areas has changed based on experience associated with economic and social transformation in rural areas in the member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Tab. 2). The main characteristic of the new paradigm is a multi-functional approach to the development of rural areas, as opposed to a sector-based approach aimed squarely at agricultural production. Another major change is in the purpose of rural development and the tools associated with this process. What is new in the new approach is the emphasis on increasing the competitiveness of rural areas in general and not just the agricultural sector. Emphasis is also placed on better use of local resources and potential in the development process. While the primary instrument of rural development in the traditional sector-based model consisted of agricultural subsidies, the new paradigm opts for an investment-based approach to rural development. Another key element of the new approach is its multi-tiered management structure, which includes the involvement of public officials from various levels of government as well as local stakeholders such as members of the community, partners in social programs, and partners in business endeavours (*OECD Rural Policy... 2006*).

Tab. 2. The old paradigm and the new paradigm of rural development according to the OECD

Characteristic	Old approach	New approach
Objectives	Equalisation, farm income, farm competitiveness	Competitiveness of rural areas, valorisation of local assets, exploitation of unused resources
Key target sector	Agriculture	Various sectors of rural economies (ex. rural tourism, manufacturing, ICT industry, etc.)
Main tools	Subsidies	Investments
Key actors	National governments, farmers	All levels of government (supranational, national, regional and local), various local stakeholders (public, private, NGOs)

Source: *OECD Rural Policy... 2006*, p. 15.

The assumptions behind the LEADER approach are consistent with the postulates of the new paradigm of rural development. The first vital thing to note is that the LEADER program established a certain major goal right from its start – increasing the competitiveness of rural areas via the pursuit of local initiatives and use of local potential. This approach perceives local development in terms of the need to holistically impact all possible areas of rural life, which is implemented via an array of integrated multi-sector activities. At the same time, the LEADER program uses investment – not subsidies – as an instrument of local development policy. The investment projects associated with this program include endeavours run by a variety of public, commercial, and social organizations that fit the set of assumptions in the development plan for a given geographic area produced earlier in the course of the development strategy process. In addition, the LEADER approach follows the principle of multi-tiered management, with the participation of public officials from different levels of government (local, regional, national, European Union) in the implementation process along with local partners in the realm of social policy and commercial endeavours.

1.2. Key features of the LEADER approach – its origins and implementation in Europe

The acronym “LEADER” comes from the French name of the program – *Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale* – which stands for “Links Between Actions Designed to Prompt Rural Area Development”. The program is designed to prompt local growth by allowing local entities to develop a predefined geographic area using its internal potential⁴. It is defined using seven key characteristics, which reveal its fundamental nature and provide a list of rules applicable to its implementation (Fig. 1). Once all seven characteristics are observed in a given geographic area, it may be argued that the LEADER program is being followed in a practical sense (*The LEADER Approach... 2006*).

The first characteristic of the LEADER program of local development is a partnership approach, manifested in the formation of Local Action Groups (LAGs). These groups constitute three-sector partnerships consisting of representatives from the public, business, and non-governmental (social) sectors. LAGs are organizational entities as well as geographic units of rural development policy implemented via the LEADER program. The purpose of the LAGs is to complete a variety of tasks as part of this program in order to implement local development policies which also help produce these policies. The fundamental purpose of these three-sector partnerships in the previous budget period (2007–2013) was the

⁴ Definition obtained from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.cc.europa.eu>).



Fig. 1. Seven key characteristics of the LEADER approach

Source: authors' own work based on *The LEADER Approach...* 2006, p. 8.

generation and realization of Local Development Strategies (LDSs) for selected geographic areas (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006). LAGs selected projects submitted by applicants in the partnership area – as part of a specific development strategy – projects designed to obtain partial financial support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The selection of these projects was part of the job of the decision-making body of the given partnership (LAG council), where at least half the members were representatives of the social and business stakeholder lobbies. Another task pursued by LAGs was the completion of collaborative projects designed to help rural areas grow. Additionally, LAGs were designed to complete a number of other tasks as part of their regular functioning including research on the assigned geographic area, organization of training sessions for local leaders, organization of information sessions, and promotional events (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006).

One very important feature of the LEADER program is its area-based approach in the form of generating and implementing a Local Development Strategy (LDS) for every selected geographic area of coverage. The LDS is the flagship instrument in implementation of the LEADER approach at the local level – within the boundaries of a given LAG. This type of program document constitutes the basis for actions taken by LAGs, as all projects completed in a given geographic

area, covered by a given strategy, must comply with its assumptions and help reach goals established therein. The geographic area covered by an LDS should be relatively small – an area with at least 10,000 residents, but no more than 150,000. The area should also be homogeneous in terms of social and cultural characteristics. The concentration of efforts on development policy for a small and relatively homogeneous area is projected to help identify key areas of potential local development as well as the main barriers to development. In addition, the geographic approach is meant to help adapt local development policy to the real needs of local residents – the target recipients of benefits created by policy (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006).

In addition to the area-based approach, the LEADER program is characterized by a bottom-up approach, which manifests itself via broad inclusion of local communities and other local stakeholders via LAGs in the process of generating and implementing strategies for each given geographic area. Local partners ought to actively participate in decision making in cases when local strategies are being considered. This includes establishing goals as well as development priorities, and selecting projects designed to accomplish these goals. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the participation process, which is vital to proper and effective goal realization in the LEADER approach, cannot be limited to the initial stage of strategy generation, but needs to occur throughout the implementation stage, and ought to also cover the evaluation stage (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006). Furthermore, the bottom-up component of the LEADER approach was not treated as merely an alternative or counterbalance to the top-down approach used by national and regional officials. In order to attain better results from the LEADER program, both of these approaches in terms of development policy ought to be combined and more adequately integrated. As in the case of the area-based approach, the bottom-up approach was designed to help adapt local development policy to the real needs of local communities and other local stakeholders including business enterprises, social organizations, and local governments (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006).

The next characteristic feature of the LEADER approach is its integrated multi-sector action plan as part of local development policy. Unlike “traditional” policies and development models, the LEADER approach is not sector-based. In the context of its assumptions, actions taken in the LDS implementation process are to apply to all areas of rural development. At the same time, projects completed via LDSs are to be linked with each other and coordinated as a whole (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006).

Of the primary characteristics of the LEADER approach, the formation of linkages is an important component designed to create various types of networks whose purpose is to assist in the sharing of experiences and transfer of knowledge between LAGs, government agencies, public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other entities involved in the process of rural development in the

European Union. The formation of such linkages is supposed to aid in the “proliferation” of best practices and opportunities for collaboration in the realm of rural development. Two types of linkage were identified in the realm of European Union rural policy as it applies to development: (1) institutional linkages, (2) informal linkages. The first group of linkages consists of networks established on the basis of EU Council Directive No. 1698/2005 with the formal name European Network for Rural Development as well as national rural area networks co-financed by the European Union. In addition to institutional networks that continue to function within the European Union, informal networks at the national or regional level have emerged in order to support the development of rural areas (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006).

Cooperation is another very significant aspect of effective goal realization within the LEADER program. This is a key characteristic of the program, and it is defined as all relations in addition to the formation of networks and informal linkages. Cooperation projects serve as one example of cooperation as part of the LEADER approach. Projects of this type consist of joint efforts coordinated by one LAG with another LAG or group applying LEADER rules and principles in other regions and countries both within and outside the European Union. However, projects are not limited to knowledge transfers and exchanges of experience, but include specific collaborative actions and are designed to solve specific problems. Projects designated as collaborative within the LEADER approach can be classified into two groups: (1) inter-territorial cooperation projects – LAG cooperation within one country, (2) transnational cooperation projects – LAG cooperation between at least two European Union countries or partnerships with countries outside of the European Union applying LEADER principles (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006, Zajda 2013).

The last primary characteristic of the LEADER program is the stimulation of innovative behaviors. This characteristic and the significance of innovation in general will be covered in another part of this publication.

The LEADER program was formally introduced in the European Union in 1991 in the form of a European Union Initiative known as LEADER I for the period 1991–1993 (Fig. 2). The program’s creation was triggered by the first structural fund reform effort taking place in 1988 (*LEADER+ Magazine* 2005, Zajda 2011). The reform effort resulted in the generation of the most important principles of so-called European cohesion policy. The regional policy rules adopted at the time included the concentration of efforts on a limited number of development goals and a limited number of regions. Underdeveloped regions were given priority in funding decisions. Another important change was the introduction of the principle of strategic (multi-year) development planning as part of regional policy. In addition, the principle of supplemental funding was formulated at the time, which presumed that European Union funding would only supplement, and not replace, country-based funding and actions within the limits of European cohesion

policy. Finally, the concept of partnership was introduced into the European Union's regional policy, which emphasized the need to include entities at various levels including social partners and business partners in the process of formulating and implementing various development programs in the European Union (*EU Cohesion Policy...* 2008).

The reform effort also produced new instruments of European regional policy taking the form of European Union Initiatives designed to solve specific problems in selected sectors and regions (*EU Cohesion Policy...* 2008). The "LEADER" program was one of sixteen initiatives created by the European Union at the time. The program was commenced in order to strengthen the development potential of rural areas via the utilization of local resources and initiatives as well as promoting the acquisition of know-how in the area of local development and the transfer of this new knowledge to other rural areas (*LEADER+ Magazine* 2005, *The LEADER Approach...* 2006).

The initial phase of the implementation of the LEADER program represented a type of experiment in local development when compared with many other country-level development programs for rural areas – both sector-type and managed top-down. The next phase of LEADER implementation can be described as a proliferation phase. This particular phase consisted of expanding the set of assumptions behind the program to include certain new aspects such as collaboration and innovation. Moreover, in addition to the ability to establish networks of linkages, the program made it possible to exchange positive experiences and best practices at the international level (*LEADER+ Magazine* 2005).

The first two phases of the LEADER program targeted poorly developed and peripheral rural areas of the European Union. In the period 1991–1993, the LEADER program covered regions qualifying for assistance based on two regional policy goals: (1) development support and structural change support for poorly developed regions with a GDP per capita of less than 75% of the EU average, (2) development support for overpopulated and peripheral rural areas characterized by low household income and relatively low GDP per capita and other problems such as environmental degradation (EU-designated Goal 5b). The next phase of expansion of the LEADER program (1994–1999) covered regions associated with EU-designated Goal 6. This goal was established in 1995 when Sweden and Finland joined the European Union. The aim of Goal 6 was to support development and structural change in sparsely populated regions⁵ (*LEADER+ Magazine* 2005).

The third phase of the LEADER program (2000–2006) was known as LEADER+ and was expanded to cover all types of rural areas across the European Union

⁵ Nomenclature and characteristics of development goals part of Cohesion Policy based on: M. Klimowicz, 2014, *Evolution of goals of European Union regional policy in the process of economic integration*, [in] Paczeński A., Klimowicz M. (ed.), *Integration and disintegration processes in Europe – an academic textbook*, OTO, Wrocław, pp. 203–240.

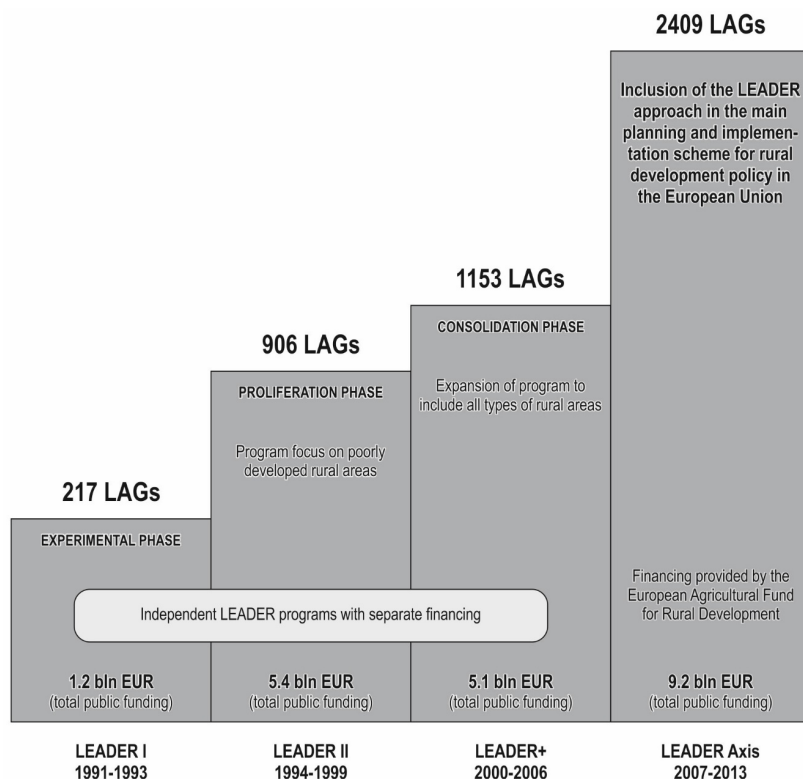


Fig. 2. Evolution of the LEADER approach in the years 1991–2013

Source: authors' own work based on http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/gateway/LEADER%20infographic_final_20140326.pdf.

(*LEADER+ Magazine* 2005). This was also the first phase when newly admitted member states of the European Union were able to participate to some extent in the LEADER implementation process. Six new states were involved in the implementation – Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Hungary – all had become EU members in 2004. Most of the new member states – except for Cyprus and Malta – had implemented programs or projects associated with rural development based on LEADER principles even prior to their admission into the European Union (Tab. 3). Most actions of this type were financed by external sources and often adopted the form of pilot programs that served to help prepare candidate states applying for membership in the European Union to properly and effectively implement the LEADER program following their admission to the European Union⁶. In the case of Poland, one type of preliminary program

⁶ Source: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/memberstates/index_pl.htm (accessed: 05.10.2016).

was known as “*Preparing rural communities for LEADER-type programs*” (2001–2006). This basic project was managed by the Cooperation Fund Foundation as part of a program called Agrolinia. The outcome of this project consisted of the training of ten experts in the workings of the LEADER program as well as 100 coordinators of local partnerships from across Poland. One additional outcome of this preliminary program was the publication of a guidebook on the formulation of integrated development strategies for a pilot program associated with LEADER+ along with an informational campaign on the LEADER approach (Furmankiewicz and Królikowska 2010).

Tab. 3. Participation of new EU member states in the LEADER program

Member state	Participation in rural development programs based on assumptions associated with the LEADER program prior to EU admission	LEADER+ program participation in the years 2004–2006	Participation in other rural development programs based on assumptions rooted in the LEADER program in 2004–2006
Cyprus	NO	NO	YES
Czech Republic	YES	YES	YES
Estonia	YES	YES	NO
Lithuania	YES	YES	NO
Latvia	YES	YES	NO
Malta	NO	NO	NO
Poland	YES	YES	NO
Slovakia	YES	NO	YES
Slovenia	YES	NO	YES
Hungary	YES	YES	NO

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/memberstates/czechrepublic.htm> (accessed: 05.10.2016).

It is important to note that the three new member states that did not choose to implement the LEADER+ program (Cyprus, Slovakia, Slovenia) in the years 2004–2006 or their initial period of program eligibility following admission to the European Union did implement other rural development programs based on a bottom-up approach characterized by partnerships and geographic focus.

The government of Cyprus took action supporting rural communities in the process of knowledge and experience gathering associated with the LEADER approach as part of a local Plan for Rural Development, which was co-financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund. The action included informational work, training work, and support for plan formulation for LEADER-type actions for the next budget period. Slovakia also completed a project as part of a technical support program known as SAPARD. This project was designed to build potential for the implementation of the LEADER approach, and targeted rural micro-regions

in order to improve their ability to perform a grassroots implementation as well as follow a geographic and integrated approach to development consistent with the LEADER method. The project provided financial support for the formulation of local development strategies and organization of local resources. Slovenia also provided support for the building of partnerships and formulation of local development strategies as part of its domestic Rural Development Program. Support for these types of actions was provided to rural communities characterized by similar needs and growth capabilities, and a willingness to work together. Malta was the only new EU member state to wait to begin a broader scale implementation of the LEADER program until 2007⁷.

It is noteworthy that the Czech Republic not only implemented the LEADER+ program in the period 2004–2006, but also implemented two other programs based on the assumptions in LEADER+. Both additional programs were financed by the country's tax revenue. The first additional program was called LEADER Czech Republic and was managed by the Ministry of Agriculture. It was a program designed for registered LAGs operating in the Czech Republic. Financial support was provided to strengthen local economic potential and improve the quality of life for local residents. The second domestic instrument supporting rural areas in the Czech Republic based on assumptions used in the LEADER approach was called LEADER & Youth, and it was managed by the Ministry of Regional Development. This second program targeted rural communities and associations at the micro-region level that were not organized as LAGs. This program was designed to support the establishment of LAGs by increasing communities' competence levels and formulating local development strategies as well as by educating local communities in the art and science of rural development⁸.

The Czech Republic is not the only EU member state to implement both the LEADER program and a set of additional rural development programs based on LEADER assumptions. The PRODER program in Spain and Regionen Aktiv program in Germany are two additional examples of LEADER-type rural development programs implemented in Europe.

Spain was much more enthusiastic about pursuing the European Union's LEADER program than other EU member states. The program was broadly adopted across rural areas in Spain. In the second LEADER implementation phase, Spain decided to use its first LEADER experience to expand the program into rural areas in regions that did not qualify for it. A twin program was created in 1996 called PRODER, which stands for "*Operational Program for the Development and Economic Diversification of Rural Areas*" (Spanish: *Programa Operativo*

⁷ Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/memberstates/malta.htm> (accessed: 05.10.2016).

⁸ Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/memberstates/czechrepublic.htm> (accessed: 05.10.2016).

de Desarrollo y Diversificación Económica de Zonas Rurales). This was a domestic rural development program designed in agreement with LEADER assumptions. The PRODER program operated until 2006 and was also funded by European Union structural funds. What made PRODER different from LEADER was its substantial agricultural focus yielding agricultural investments. Other differences included its domestic focus, with no international collaboration, absence of pressure to produce innovative solutions, and little effort to transfer knowledge (*OECD Rural Policy... 2009*).

Germany also introduced a domestic rural development program partly based on ideas and principles constituting the LEADER approach. The program was called “*Regionen Aktiv*” and was launched in 2001 in order to strengthen the development potential of rural areas, yield additional sources of income for rural populations, and help develop farming practices more in line with environmental concerns (*OECD Rural Policy... 2007*). Local partnerships were asked to compete in order to obtain grants for planned projects. The *Regionen Aktiv* program also mirrored LEADER assumptions in terms of its geographic focus, integrated approach, and multi-sector collaboration in the process of project implementation. Another common feature of the *Regionen Aktiv* and LEADER programs was the decision-making process, which aimed to make all participants equals (Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014).

The implementation of the LEADER program was largely independent in each member state and region of the European Union until the end of 2006. All participating member states operated independent LEADER programs in the years 1991–2006, all with separate financing packages determined at the EU level (*The LEADER Approach... 2006*). This situation changed substantially with the beginning of a new budget period.

The LEADER approach became a mainstream planning and implementation approach in the European Union by 2007, and was designed to assist development in rural areas. It also became a “priority area” in Rural Development Programs available in the European Union⁹. At the same time, the LEADER program, which

⁹ A Rural Development Program is an instrument or operational program that serves to achieve the goals and objectives of the European Union’s Common Agricultural Policy in the area of rural development. These types of documents are available for each member state and serve as a basis for the implementation of various programs in the realm of rural development, co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. A total of 88 Rural Development Programs were approved in the European Union in the years 2007–2013. In countries with a federal structure or regional structure as well as in countries with dependent overseas territories, these types of documents were produced for each constituent or region. This point applies to countries such as Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Great Britain. Each Rural Development Program included four priority areas (axes) designed to organize actions focused on distinct aspects of rural development:

- Area I. Improvement in the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sector (economic axis). This area supports projects focused on job training for individuals working in agriculture and forestry, modernization of farms, creation of infrastructure and improvements in infrastructure

had been previously supported by structural funds, became a part of Common Agricultural Policy in the European Union. Its implementation in all member states has been co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development since 2007.

The fundamental goals and objectives of Rural Development Program implementation and the resulting LEADER approach were established and standardized at the European Union level in the 2007–2013 budget period. The most important legal act outlining regulations and implementation instruments of the European Union's rural development policy in the 2007–2013 budget period was called *Council Directive No. 1698/2005 dated September 20, 2005 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development*. The guidelines set forth in this document were further elaborated on by national legislatures in each EU member state with regard to support for rural development utilizing European Union funds. Additional details and clarification were also provided in Rural Development Program documents themselves produced by each EU member state. It is noteworthy that despite the strong standardization of European Union policy regarding the development of rural areas, Rural Development Programs produced by member states as well as regions often differ from one another in terms of the scope of solutions provided to realize the goals of the LEADER approach. These differences apply mainly to criteria used to establish three-sector partnerships, approved population size per LAG, and exclusions that apply to some geographic areas not permitted to implement LDSs (Tab. 4). This detailed approach to rural development planning may be considered an attempt at an optimal adaptation of LEADER program rules to local development conditions, especially given the strongly specific nature of rural areas¹⁰.

employed in agriculture and forestry, improvement in the quality of farm products, and formation and growth of farm producer associations.

- Area II. Improvement in the natural environment and rural areas (environmental axis). This area is designed to support projects focused on the implementation of programs associated with agriculture and environmental concerns as well as provide support for farms in mountain areas and other areas unfavorable to agriculture.
- Area III. Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy (social axis). This area supports projects focused on diversifying the rural economy in the direction of non-farm activity, the establishment and development of micro-businesses, expansion of technical infrastructure in rural areas, and rural renewal and development in the form of the creation of public spaces, improvement in social programs, and protection and maintenance of cultural heritage.
- Area IV. LEADER (methodological axis).

¹⁰ Sweden is one good example. The country's Rural Development Program prescribes that the approved number of residents per one LAG ought to range from 10,000 to 100,000. The program also makes an exception, where some LAGs may be established in areas with fewer than 10,000 residents. This exception was made out of necessity for northern Sweden and for other regions with low population density (*Rural Development Programme for Sweden 2008*).

Tab. 4. Population size criteria for LAGs in selected European Union countries

Country	Population size per LAG	Exclusions in LDS areas
Czech Republic	10,000 – 100,000	cities with over 25,000 residents
Lithuania	5,000 – 150,000	cities with over 6,000 residents
Latvia	5,000 – 65,000	cities with over 15,000 residents, percentage of urban population not larger than 49% of total population in LAG area
Poland	10,000 – 150,000	urban municipalities with over 5,000 residents, cities with over 20,000 residents living in urban-rural municipalities
Romania	10,000 – 150,000	cities with over 20,000 residents, percentage of urban population not larger than 25% of total population in LAG area
Slovakia	10,000 – 150,000	municipalities with over 20,000 residents
Sweden	10,000 – 100,000	cities with over 20,000 residents
Hungary	5,000 – 100,000	municipalities with over 10,000 residents or population density over 120 inhabitants/km ² , municipalities located within the boundaries of the Budapest agglomeration

Source: authors' own work based on Rural Development Program data for 2007–2013 for selected countries.

The increase in the number of three-sector partnerships in every budget period may be a sign that local communities and stakeholders in EU member states are becoming increasingly interested in the LEADER approach. The number of LAGs using the LEADER approach in the period 2007–2013 in the European Union was 2,409. This is more than twice the number of LAGs compared with the previous LEADER period. The largest number of LAGs established during this period of time (336) were established in Poland¹¹ (Fig. 3).

A total of 9.15 billion EUR was budgeted for the implementation of the LEADER approach in the European Union in the years 2007–2013. This amount included funds from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and domestic tax revenue in each member state. The funds assigned to the LEADER program constituted 6.0% of all public funds used to implement Rural Development Programs in this budget period. At the same time, member states of the EU differed markedly in terms of the percentage of funding dedicated to the LEADER approach in their rural development programs (Fig. 4). The largest percentage of funding used to implement the LEADER program as part of Rural Development Programs or slightly more than 10% was noted for Denmark and the Netherlands. Other countries that provided a significantly large percentage of funding for the

¹¹ A total of 338 LAGs were selected for LDS implementation following a competition announced in late September 2008. Two LAGs were later excluded from the implementation due to reasons associated with their application (*Evaluation of functioning...* 2012).

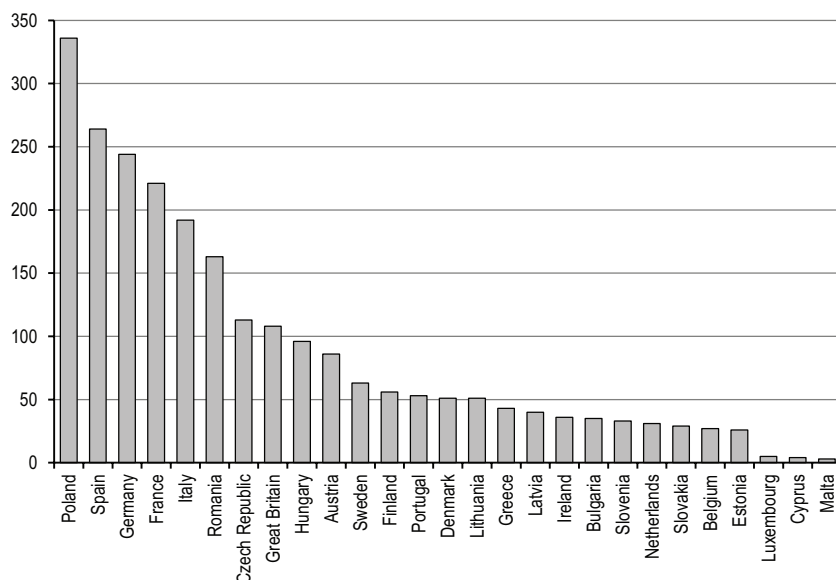


Fig. 3. Number of LAGs functioning in European Union countries in the years 2007–2013

Source: authors' own work on the basis of data from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

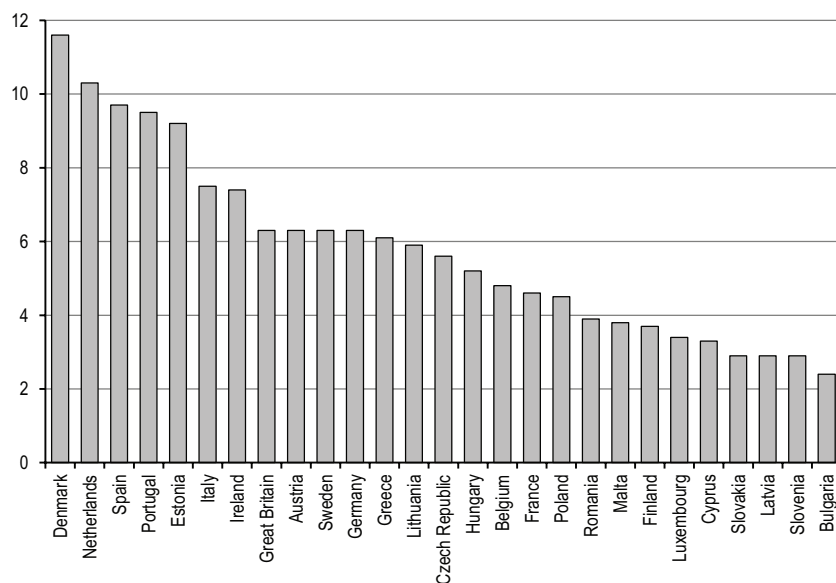


Fig. 4. Percentage of public funds dedicated to the implementation of the LEADER program as part of Rural Development Programs (%) in EU member states in the period 2007–2013

Source: authors' own work on the basis of data from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

implementation of the LEADER program included Spain (9.7%) and Portugal (9.5%). Of the new members of the EU, the largest share of funds assigned to the implementation of the LEADER program was noted for Estonia (9.2%). It is also noteworthy that this was the only new member state whose percentage of funds dedicated to the LEADER program was higher than the European Union average. On the other hand, the smallest percentage of funds used to implement the LEADER program was noted for Bulgaria (2.4%). Other EU member states characterized by very small commitments to the implementation of the LEADER program as part of Rural Development Programs were Slovenia, Latvia, and Slovakia at only 2.9%¹².

Three goals were realized within the LEADER program in each member state of the EU in the budget period 2007–2013: (1) implementation of local development strategies produced by LAGs; the implementation process is driven by local beneficiaries completing projects in a partnership area, (2) implementation of collaborative projects completed jointly by at least two LAGs, (3) functioning of LAGs, acquisition of skills, and process triggering; covering the costs of routine activity, organizational activity, educational activity, promotional activity, as well as informational activity. The first of the goals was the most important from the perspective of implementing LEADER assumptions and reaching general rural development goals in the European Union. In the period 2007–2013, the implementation of LDSs was assigned 80% of all public funds dedicated to the LEADER program in the European Union or 7.31 billion EUR. At the same time, all EU member states except for Luxembourg allocated at least 70% of their available LEADER funds for this purpose (Fig. 5). The largest share of funds dedicated to the implementation of LDSs was noted for Austria (90.0%) and the Netherlands (88.1%). However, the goal characterized by the least amount of funding on the part of EU member states was the funding of collaborative projects. Even in this case, significant differences were noted between member states. Luxembourg allocated the largest percentage of funds for the implementation of collaborative projects (17.0%), while Denmark allocated the smallest share of funds available from the LEADER program for this purpose (0.1%)¹³.

In the period 2007–2013, the LEADER program was viewed as an “methodological axis” whose realization through local development strategies would result in the attainment of goals associated with at least one of the other three priority areas outlined in Rural Development Programs (economic, environmental, social). Most EU member states (18 states) permitted the submission of projects qualifying for support via LDSs from all three “priority areas” of Rural

¹² Source: data from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

¹³ Source: data from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

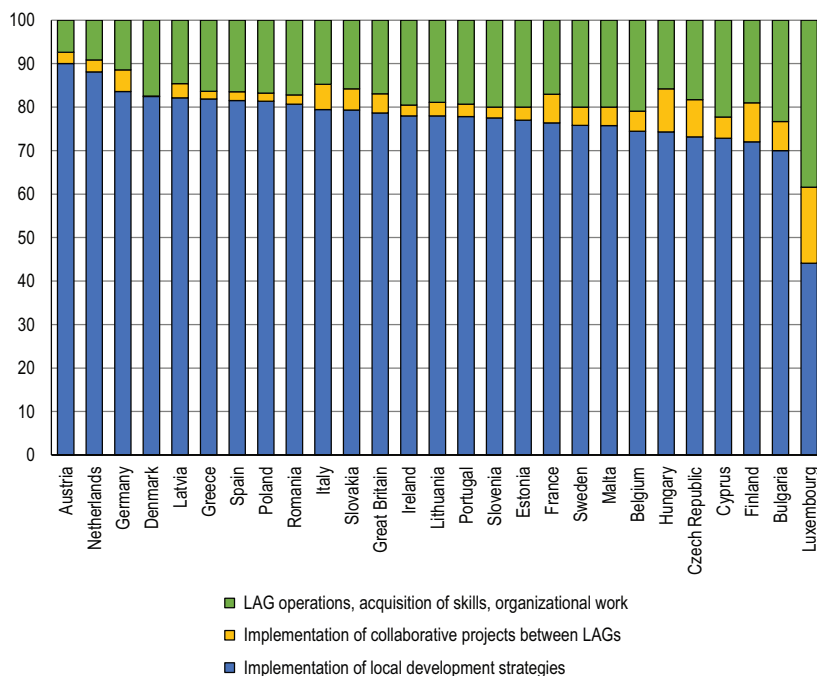


Fig. 5. Distribution of funds dedicated to the implementation of the LEADER program in the years 2007–2013 between various program activity areas – shown by EU member state (%)

Source: authors' own work on the basis of data from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

Development Programs. Five other member states – Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, and Latvia – permitted the submission of LDS projects associated with economic and social priority areas. In the case of Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, and Slovakia, the range of permitted projects designed to obtain LDS financing was limited to the social “priority area”: (1) quality of life in rural areas, (2) diversification of the rural economy. It is noteworthy that in Ireland each project associated with the social priority area of Rural Development Programs was executed fully in line with LEADER assumptions – via an appropriate LDS¹⁴.

When considering the range of potential forms of the activity part of an LDS in each given member state of the European Union, it is useful to focus on a characteristic implementation element of LDS planning in Poland for the 2007–2013 planning period or the concept of small projects, defined as projects with a total value ranging between 4,500 PLN and 100,000 PLN, which do not qualify for support within the framework of the social priority area found in Rural Development Programs. However, these “non-social” projects are designed to attain goals

¹⁴ Source: data from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

that are relevant to the social priority area or to improve the quality of life for rural residents and increased diversity of economic activity in LAG areas (*Development Program...*2016). These small projects were designed to fill the void resulting from the omission of both economic and environmental axes in LDS planning (Kamiński 2011). In addition, these types of projects, primarily targeting entities in the social priority area, were intended to play a supplementary role in projects designated as elements of rural renewal and development. The introduction of small projects was to serve the purpose of stimulating an additional wave of activity in the non-governmental sector operating in rural areas. At the same time, small projects were to play an important role in the process of bottom-up development as well as sustainable development in rural areas. In addition, small projects were to encourage a wave of applications from rural organizations seeking to acquire European Union funds (Knieć 2012). However, as the next section in this chapter notes, various administrative barriers tended to diminish the outcomes of these small projects, and most funds assigned to the small project area were reassigned to entities in the public sector.

The LEADER approach is based on the principle of multi-tiered management. The basic element of the implementation system for the LEADER program in all European Union states is the LAG, which is exclusively authorized to formulate an LDS, and then execute it. However, in addition to LAGs operating at the local level, entities operating at the national and regional levels are also engaged in implementing the LEADER program. Among these entities, a key role is played by Managing Institutions, which are responsible for the proper and effective implementation of Rural Development Programs, and consequently for the implementation of the LEADER program (*Council Directive No. 1698/2005*). In countries with only one Rural Development Program, the role of Managing Institution is played by the national ministry for agriculture and rural development. On the other hand, EU states with more than one Rural Development Program delegate the task of institutional management to regional governments. In the case of Poland, selected administrative powers associated with implementing LEADER, and available to the country's Rural Development Program Managing Institution called the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, were delegated to local governments at the province level (Polish: voivodeship). This delegation resulted in the creation of an intermediate (regional) level of LEADER program implementation. Provincial governments were then designated "Implementing Institutions" and were assigned the following tasks: (1) selection of LAGs via a competitive process in order to implement LDSs, (2) supervision of LAG activity, (3) monitoring and assessment of the LDS implementation process (*Act of March 7, 2007 on support for rural development...*). In addition, Payment Agencies and Certification Bureaus played a significant role in implementing the LEADER approach. Payment Agencies are units or services associated with each particular EU country whose main task is to make payments to beneficiaries (funding applicants)

of projects co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Certification Bureaus are either public or private entities designated by member states whose duties include the approval (or rejection) of invoices issued by Payment Agencies by assessing their veracity as well as completeness and accuracy (*Council Directive No. 1290/2005*).

The degree of autonomy and extent of authority delegated to LAGs in different EU states is different mostly due to different organizational structures, institutional context, and legal and administrative differences between European Union states (*The LEADER Approach...* 2006). Three primary methods for implementing the LEADER program can be discerned based on the experiences of various EU states' efforts in the period 2007–2013 and the extent of authority delegated to LAGs. The three methods (models) included the decentralization of tasks such as the selection of projects (model 1), selection of projects and issuance of payments to beneficiaries (model 2), and approval of projects (model 3) (*Extended Report on the Implementation...* 2010).

The first model may be considered the most fundamental model – or one where three-sector partnerships are delegated the least amount of authority in the LEADER implementation process: (1) practical responsibility for LDS implementation, (2) tasks associated with choice of projects applying for funding within the LDS. In this model, most tasks associated with the management of the LDS implementation process are performed at the local level; however, the LAG does not formally approve projects selected for co-financing purposes, and does not issue payments using funds from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development to entities applying for and benefiting from such projects (*Extended Report on the Implementation...* 2010). LAGs following the first model were first and foremost responsible for the preparation of the project application process including the formulation of “local selection criteria”, as well as for publication of announcements about the application process and acceptance of project applications from potential beneficiaries. LAGs also evaluated the submitted projects and were to produce project ranking lists. The short list of projects slated for co-financing was then sent to a Managing Institution in order to receive final confirmation. In addition, LAGs were tasked with monitoring LDS implementation, including the implementation of projects selected for co-financing as well as with the final evaluation of each given project (*Extended Report...* 2010).

A decentralized model for implementing LEADER program tasks associated with the selection of projects was adopted by most EU member states (18), and concerned 37 Rural Development Programs or 42% of all such programs implemented in the period 2007–2013. The first model of LEADER program implementation was used in most new EU member states, except for Bulgaria, Malta, and Hungary, and in Nordic countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. Germany as well as Austria and the Netherlands also adopted the LEADER program. In addition, selected regions of some European countries adopted the first model of

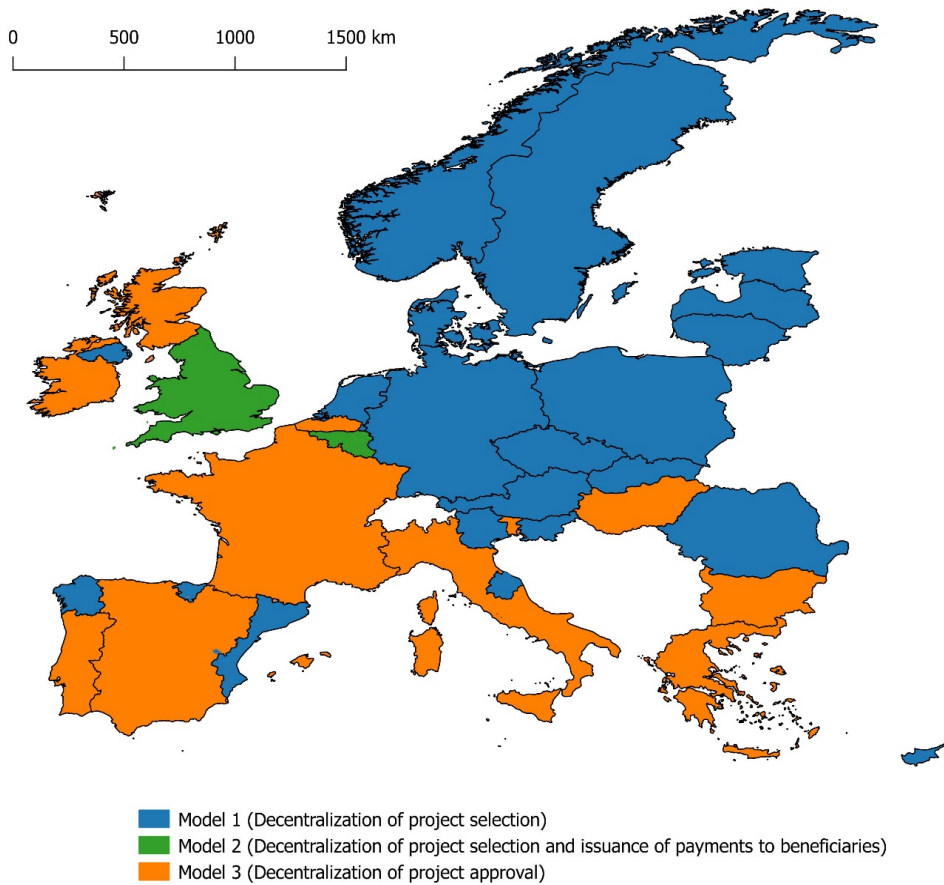


Fig. 6. Implementation models for the LEADER program in EU states in 2007–2013

Source: *Extended Report: the Implementation of Leader Approach*, 2010, p. 6.

LEADER implementation in the period 2007–2013: (1) Italian regions of Bolzano, Marche, Umbria, and Veneto, (2) Spanish regions of Galicia, Catalonia, Valencia, and the Basque Country, (3) British region of Northern Ireland (*Extended Report on the Implementation...* 2010).

The main advantages of using a purely decentralized model of project selection include less administrative work for LAGs, allowing them to focus more on organizational work and development efforts (Tab. 6). Disadvantages include a feeling of reduced executive power for LAGs, which can translate into less “ownership” of their self-produced strategies as well as additional work in the area of administration, leading to prolonged evaluation proceedings and a longer formal approval process for projects designed to obtain LDS co-financing (*Extended Report on the Implementation...* 2010).

Tab. 5. Advantages and disadvantages of main LEADER implementation models in the EU

Model	Advantages / strengths of model	Disadvantages / weak sides of model
Model 1. Decentralization of project selection process	Relatively small administrative burden. The LAG can focus more on animation and development work. Less risk, especially if a project fails.	LAGs have less sense of ownership of their local development strategy. Less control over project implementation if control tasks not delegated. There is an additional administrative layer. It can take longer to assess and approve projects.
Model 2. Decentralization of project selection process and issuance of EAFRD payments to beneficiaries	LAGs have greater visibility towards the beneficiaries. It reduces time to pay claims.	It can be difficult to find locally an organization prepared to act as an accountable body with the capacity to put in place the necessary administration and accountability systems. Greater degree of administration involving more staff. There might be risks linked to liquidity problems.
Model 3. Decentralization of project approval process	LAGs have a greater visibility towards the beneficiaries. The LAG partners have greater ownership of their strategy. It allows more autonomy over what projects are finally approved and how to use the funds. It is easier to maximise coordination between projects. It reduces time to assess and approve projects. Establishment of mature and reliable mechanism for decentralized implementation of integrated, multi-sectoral development programmes (sustainability).	It can be difficult to find locally an organization prepared to act as an accountable body with the capacity to put in place the necessary administration and accountability systems. Greater degree of administration involving more staff.

Source: *Extended Report: the Implementation of Leader Approach*, 2010, pp. 2–5.

A variety of problems in the LEADER implementation process associated with tasks in the realm of administration have become apparent in Poland and elsewhere in the EU, especially in the area of implementing small projects. Excessively expanded and complicated project procedures have yielded a bureaucracy that does not match the size of the projects, which discourages the

non-governmental sector from applying for LEADER funds. Administrative barriers that result in less interest on the part of social organizations to implement small projects include the need to complete long and complicated forms, detailed control procedures, long waiting periods for the project evaluation to be completed, and long waiting periods for refunds (Kamiński 2011, Zajda 2011, Psyk-Piotrowska et al. 2013). The administrative barriers described earlier resulted in fewer successful outcomes for entities pursuing small projects, while most of the dedicated funds (60.7% of EAFRD funds by December 2013) were reassigned to the public sector¹⁵. Wojciech Kniec (2012) emphasizes the fact that excessive formalization and bureaucratization, in the case of small projects, became a barrier to rural development, instead of serving to help generate “civic capital” and promote an endogenous approach to development.

While the first model of LEADER implementation was a fundamental model, where LAGs are to receive a certain minimum of authority determined at the European Union level, the second and third models represent an elaboration on the first model produced by member states. In the second model, LAGs received both the ability to choose projects slated to obtain co-financing as part of an LDS as well as the authority to issue payments to the beneficiaries (applicants) of the projects considered. The second model was only used in three countries: (1) Belgium – for the Rural Development Program for the region of Wallonia, (2) Luxembourg, (3) Great Britain (England, Wales) (*Extended Report on the Implementation...* 2010). The key advantages of this model are reduced payment issuance times for beneficiaries using EAFRD funds as part of LDS implementation, and increased LAG control over beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the second model is much more demanding than the first model in organizational terms or the need to provide various management and accounting systems and a larger number of administrative employees (*Extended Report on the Implementation...* 2010).

In the third LEADER implementation model, the LAG is responsible for both the choice and evaluation of projects as part of LDS co-financing as well as for formal approval of projects and notification of the beneficiaries of this decision. A characteristic feature of this model was the realization of legal obligations with respect to beneficiaries directly via the LAG. The third model provided for the issuance of payments to beneficiaries via LAGs (option 1) or payment agencies (option 2). This model for implementing LEADER was used in 11 EU member states and covered most Rural Development Programs (52% in the period 2007–2013). This model of implementation was most often selected by countries focusing on specific regions instead of each country as a whole (Spain, France, Italy).

¹⁵ Source: data from Poland's Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture (ARMA) on projects that were completed as part of LDS implementation in the years 2007–2013 (data as of December 31, 2013).

The third model was also used in three new EU member states (Bulgaria, Malta, Hungary) (*Extended Report on the Implementation...* 2010).

As in the case of the second model, the third LEADER implementation model required LAGs to possess a substantially larger organizational potential (administration and accounting) than that in the fundamental model (1). The third model was considered to be the most advanced and credible of the three proposed mechanisms for decentralized implementation of integrated and multi-sector local development programs, as viewed from the perspective of local actors. The main advantages of this model, as it applies to the implementation of the LEADER effort, included reduced project evaluation and approval times as well as better project coordination. In addition, it yields a stronger feeling of executive power on the part of the LAG, along with a stronger feeling of local ownership of strategies formulated by LAGs. Other benefits include greater LAG autonomy in the area of project selection and EAFRD fund utilization (*Extended Report on the Implementation...* 2010).

An analysis of issues associated with implementing LEADER in the European Union in the period 2007–2013 needs to consider the fact that EU member states differed in terms of the efficiency of funding usage applicable to this program (Fig. 7). By December 2013, the total funding usage rate for public funds dedicated to the LEADER program as part of various Rural Development Programs was only 46.7% for the entire European Union. The LEADER priority area was characterized by the lowest level of utilizing funding among all the priority areas in Rural Development Programs. This is especially true when compared with the environmental priority area, where 87.6% of available funds were used by the end of 2013. Countries with the highest rate of funding utilization with respect to funds available for the LEADER program in the period 2007–2013 were Ireland, Estonia, and the Netherlands. Each of the three countries had utilized about 75% of public funds allotted to the LEADER program as part of Rural Development Programs by December 2013. A high rate of utilizing funding for the LEADER program was also noted for Austria and the Czech Republic, with each country using about 70% of available funds. The following seven member states – Belgium, Finland, Slovenia, Latvia, Denmark, Great Britain, and Germany – were characterized by a utilization rate for the LEADER program at 50% to 60%. The other end of the funding utilization spectrum consisted of Romania, where only 7.7% of available public funds were used to support the implementation of programs via the LEADER approach. In addition, very low funding utilization rates were noted for Cyprus (14.5%), Greece (15.4%) and Bulgaria (16.0%)¹⁶.

In the period 2007–2013, the LEADER program was expanded to cover another area of European Union policy – Common Fisheries Policy – which focused on regions dependent on commercial fishing for local development. The process

¹⁶ Source: data from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

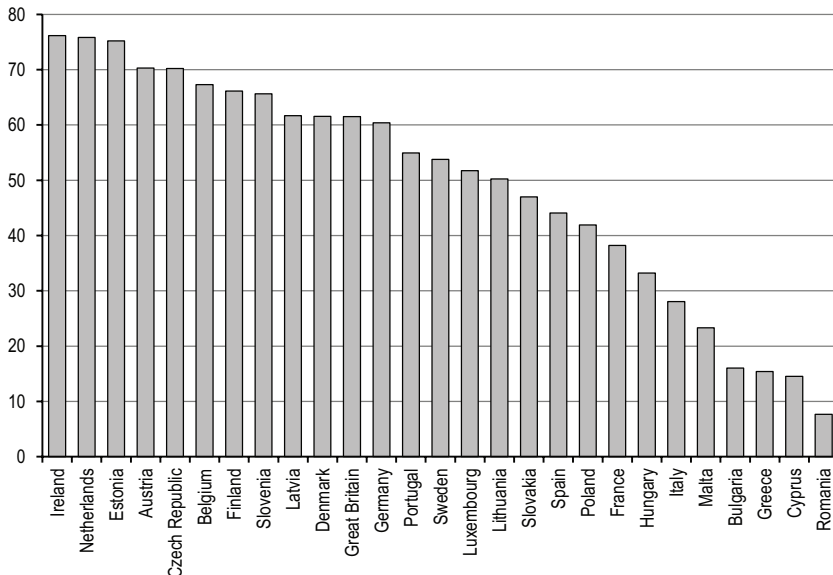


Fig. 7. Funding utilization rate (%) for LEADER program implementation for the period 2007–2013 for European Union member states, as of the end of 2013

Source: authors' own work on the basis of data from the European Network for Rural Development (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

of establishing rules and assumptions for the Fisheries Policy of the European Union in the period 2007–2013 led to the conclusion that sustainable development of areas dependent on commercial fishing will be driven by LAGs operating in fisheries areas. The development efforts were to focus on increasing these areas' overall competitiveness, restructuring and economic diversification, environmental protection, maintenance of cultural heritage, tourism infrastructure development, and social services. Fisheries LAGs are inter-sector partnerships that function much like regular LAGs and perform similar tasks, but in geographic areas dependent on commercial fishing. One of these tasks is the formulation and execution of a local development strategy based on the grassroots approach, which includes selecting projects slated to obtain financing from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (*Council Directive No. 1198/2006*). A total of 310 Fisheries LAGs were established in the previous budget period in 21 European Union member states (Fig. 8). The largest number of new Fisheries LAGs were established in Poland (48) and Italy (43).

With the start of the new budget period (2014–2020), the LEADER approach, used as part of rural development policy since 1991 and the development policy of regions that depend on commercial fishing (since 2007), has evolved towards becoming a “broader” instrument of local development, taking the form of Community-Led Local Development. In addition, the LEADER approach has been

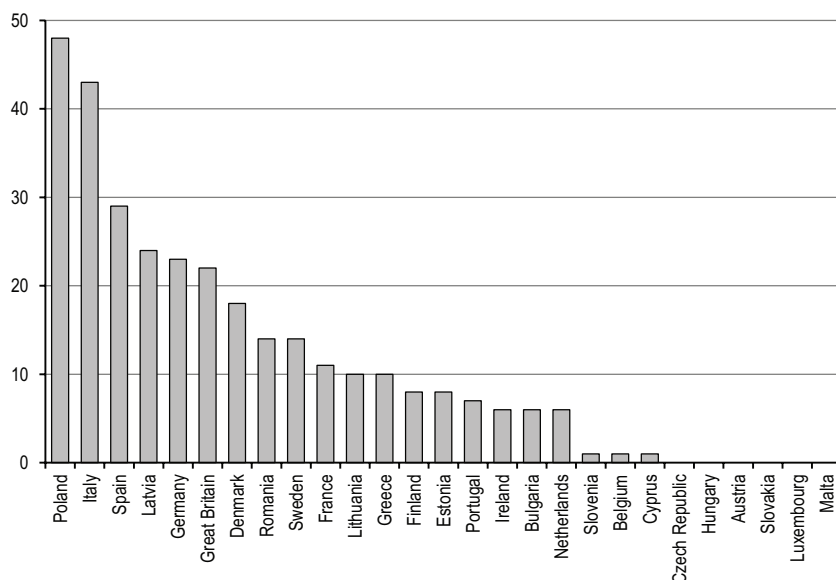


Fig. 8. Number of Fisheries LAGs functioning in European Union countries in the years 2007–2013

Source: authors' own work on the basis of data from the European Fisheries Areas Network (<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet>).

expanded into the area of so-called European Cohesion Policy – or the European Regional Development Fund as well as European Social Fund¹⁷. This newest instrument of local development, firmly rooted in the experience of the LEADER approach, is designed to apply to all main forms of development policy in the European Union and all types of geographic areas found therein (rural, urban, other – areas dependent on fishing).

¹⁷ Source: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld_pl.

Chapter 2

THE PARTICIPATORY DIMENSION OF THE LEADER APPROACH

2.1. The importance and meaning of participation

The objective of this chapter is to approach critically the idea of participation and participatory development as used in the LEADER approach. Evaluating the experiences of the LEADER approach may help analyze the current activity of local action groups and what determines the implementation of measures based on this approach, i.e., Community-Led Local Development¹.

LEADER was the only rural development EU programme that was based on civic participation to such a great extent. According to Trevor Parfitt (2004), we can treat participation both as a means and as an end. Participation is primarily the means that allows the recognition, activation, and better use of local resources for local development. The implementation of participatory approaches can also be treated as an end in itself, a way to empower residents to a higher degree and to develop civil society.

The participatory character of the LEADER programme has been unique as compared to other approaches applied in the EU policy of support and development of rural areas. But the very idea of civic participation and direct inclusion of citizens in planning and implementing certain programmes and public projects has a long tradition. Another area in which various participatory approaches have been widely implemented is development assistance (Groves, Hinton 2004). International assistance organizations declare that they implement participatory approaches in order to ensure the subjective treatment of the beneficiary communities, so that the people who need help the most would be the center of attention of assistance programmes.

In policies aimed at general development or assistance, the turn towards participatory approaches was the effect of disappointment with the dominant structuralist approaches, with their centralism, top-down attitude, hegemony of experts, and

¹ The text is based on the chapter: K. Janas, 2015, *What Participation?*, [in:] Sykała Ł., Dej M., Wolski O. (ed.), *The LEADER Method. Transferring Experience of the Visegrad Group Countries to Georgia*, Institute of Urban Development, Cracow, pp. 23–37.

paternalism of the authorities. The lack of recognition of real needs of local communities and the implementing of “overhead” projects, e.g., in the case of many reactivation projects, was found to be a main factor leading to their ultimate failure. The creation of alternative developmental models began with the report of the Dag Hammarskjöld foundation, “*What Now? Another Development*” of 1975. (*What Now...* 1975). So-called “alternative development” redefined the mainstream approach to the policy of development in three areas: actors, methods, and objectives (Pieterse 2002). In alternative models, the main actors are citizens and the so-called third sector (Nerfin 1977). In time, the term of alternative development was directly identified with development from below. The ‘below’ element mostly referred to local communities and the NGO sector. The redefinition of developmental goals meant adjusting them better to the needs of local communities, particularly less developed ones. The method used to achieve that goal was different participatory approaches, by including the communities in assistance programmes and raising their self-awareness.

The participatory approach, which in the beginning was mainly associated with alternative development, was very quickly adopted to mainstream developmental policies. For example, in Great Britain since the beginning of the 1970s, nearly all urban development programmes have included references to participation and social engagement. This rhetoric was adopted by the new members of the European Union, too, which began to renew their neglected city centers thanks to EU resources, e.g., dedicated to revitalization. Within the framework of general developmental policies, civic participation also became *the new orthodoxy*, called so by Heiko Henkel and Roderick Stirrat (2001). In the mid-1990s, the participatory approach became an inseparable part of the policies of the majority of development-supporting institutions and governmental/international assistance organizations, including the World Bank. The World Bank also introduced at the end of 1980s the concept of good governance which soon entailed public participation as one of its cornerstones.

This transition from alternative development to mainstream development, or the appropriation of the idea of civic participation by the dominant actors, has caused its instrumentalization. Instrumental treatment of participatory discourse is currently the greatest threat to the idea of participation, which has not led to a change of power relations and to the empowerment of excluded or marginalized communities but instead become a cover legitimizing the activity of the elites and most influential groups, petrifying current power relations (Cooke, Kothari 2001). This risk connected with urban policies is highlighted by Markus Miessen (2010) in his famous book *The nightmare of participation*. Participation is a game of double pretence. First, the authorities hand over to the residents one per cent of the town’s budget exactly to be able to use the remaining ninety-nine per cent more freely. This way, they can easily refute the charge that they ignore residents’ needs (Pobłocki 2013).

Jeremy Tills (2006) stresses one more negative aspect of the mainstreaming of participation. Recently, the term “participation” has been overused, much like another term, “sustainable development”. Both are qualities of sustainable communities, which in accordance with the current rhetoric are constituted on the basis of the rules of democratic participation. Of course the problem is that due to this overuse, terms such as “participation”, “community”, or “sustainable development” have lost their original meanings. They give the impression, or pretence, of credibility. Too often, what we call participation is an intentional attempt to renounce reality rather than a real process of social change.

The current rhetoric gives the impression of a universal recipe for development. But the scope and the final form of participatory activities must take into consideration the cultural and political context, the existing power relations, etc.

What is (or should be) civic participation and what are its objectives? Even a quick review of the literature shows that the scope of the concept varies depending on the professional perspective, context of participation, and ideological assumptions. In addition, people’s understanding of participation evolves over time.

The basic division was made in the beginning: Sharon Penderis (2012), on the basis of concepts by Stan Burkey (1993) and Peter Oakley (1991), identifies participation understood as a means to achieve the goals of different programmes, policies, or projects, and participation as an end: stressing participation understood as a process of awakening awareness at different levels, a process of endogenous change and development or an improvement of the abilities of the social groups that are the beneficiaries of pro-developmental activities (Penderis 1996: 127). The latter perspective involves the ability of humans as individuals to be active subjects who demand to exercise their rights (Hickey, Mohan, 2005: 3). In this case, the main goal of participation, apart from the improved efficiency of developmental activities, is to deepen the democratic process, to promote the rules of good governance, and to engage residents in local decision-making. This understanding of participation is most coincident with the assumptions of one of the first promoters of participatory development, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who claimed that development should not be the privilege of chosen ones but the right of every person (Freire, 2003: 88). Peter Oakley (1995) even mentions two schools of thinking about participation: the first perceives it as key to including human resources in efforts to foster development, and the other perceives participation in a different light, as an element of coping with the structural causes of human poverty rather than another extra element of developmental projects.

The popular understanding of participation is very simplified and refers to any way of engaging citizens and the representatives of the social sector in decision-making processes, mostly at the local level (Brodie, Cowling and Nissan, 2009). However, obligatory public consultations very rarely help achieve the meta-goals of participation, such as higher empowerment of vulnerable local communities (Penderis 2012), and much more often involve simulation or manipulation

(Leal 2007). Therefore, as Sharon Penderis holds (2012: 14): *Despite overwhelming consensus that participation is a 'good thing', with positive connotations, its praxis has failed to bring about its intention of significant social change and empowerment.*

One of the crucial characteristics of the participation process is the evaluation of how much the citizens are engaged and involved in it, what roles they are attributed, and what the relationships are between the citizens and the representative authorities/institutions that implement broadly understood developmental projects, etc. The best known division is a ladder of citizen participation by Sherry Arnstein (1969), who identified eight degrees depending on citizens' engagement. In fact, the first two forms have nothing to do with participation, but they are often used to make a pretence of it. The next three – informing, consultation, and placation – are most frequently applied by local administration and different entities that offer developmental assistance or implement projects for local communities. Arnstein calls these practices with different degrees of pretence. Only the last three forms – partnership, delegated power, and citizen control – can be regarded as forms of real civic participation, since they assume a measure of power delegation: leaving it to residents and local organizations or institutions.

An interesting typology of participation activities is proposed by Sarah White (2011). She identifies three kinds of characteristics that different forms of participation may have. The first two focus on what interests participation may serve. On the one hand, the interest may be top-down – the interest of the entities that implement developmental programmes. On the other hand, the interest may be bottom-up, i.e. how the beneficiaries perceive the programme and what they expect from their participation. The third characteristic is the general function of each form of participation. The characteristics are presented in the table below (Tab. 6). As the author emphasizes, the identified forms are purely analytic, and in practice they may come in different combinations. Moreover, because participation is always a process that covers a certain time span, it may evolve to other forms depending on the changing interests and circumstances. Indeed, the interests of participants may vary as well. They may even be contradictory.

Tab. 6. Types of participation activities

Form	Interest		Function
	Top-Down	Bottom-Up	
Nominal	Legitimation	Inclusion	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency	Cost	Means
Representative	Sustainability	Leverage	Voice
Transformative	Empowerment	Empowerment	Means/End

Source: White 2011.

Nominal participation more or less corresponds to the first four degrees of Arnstein's ladder of participation, so it includes activities that have the pretence of participation, mostly used to legitimize the activity of the authorities or implementing institutions. The participants' interest may be associated with potential inclusion: 'we may not benefit much from it, but still it is better to be in line'. The function of participation understood in this way can be referred to as "for show". Instrumental participation, in turn, first of all serves as an instrument, a means to achieve the goals assumed by the programme or project. This is usually connected with engaging residents at the stage of carrying out certain tasks. The interest of implementing entities is mostly connected with greater efficiency of the project, which means some costs for the participants, such as co-financing or their own labour, which they will be ready to incur if the final effect (e.g., the construction of a school) is important enough for them. Another form is representative participation, different from the previous one in that the participants have some impact on the ultimate form of the programme/project, and have the right to express their interests and expectations. From the bottom-up perspective, such participation is perceived as an important opportunity, a lever that allows achievement of one's own goals. From the top-down perspective, the main benefit is greater durability of the effects of the performed tasks. The fullest form of participation involves change based on full empowerment of participants: they can point to the desirable direction, but they can also participate in decision making. From this perspective, participation is both the means and the end. Empowerment is both in the interest of participants (as it helps them realize their problems, identify the causes of the problems, and choose the way of solving them) and of the authorities. Empowerment does not only improve the durability of effects, but it also gives the chance of permanent change of the previous developmental trajectory².

Different reforms and levels of participation can also be arranged along an axis from "passive beneficiaries" to "empowered citizens" (Penderis 2012). These three levels of participation between the extremes correspond to expressions typically used to refer to people being the target of certain assistance programmes or projects. In the case of activities that do not have much to do with real participation, they are usually "beneficiaries". Wherever the activities involve consultation – with people, local organizations, and companies engaging in the implementation of the planned tasks – they are mostly called "participants". However, it is only in the case of partners that full governance and empowerment take place.

² According to R. Scheyvens (2009: 464). The notion of empowerment can be seen as implicit in social movements, and the struggle for democracy and independence that date back hundreds of years; however, its use in development quarters is more recent. Empowerment is a crucial aspect of development for social groups which face disadvantages. When employed by development agencies, however, empowerment can be seen to represent a range of meanings. A neoliberal approach to empowerment has also been the basis of programs to develop small scale entrepreneurialism among the poor and thus overcome economic and social inequalities between regions.

The analytical model of participation proposed by Penderis copies the dichotomous vision of the process, also suggesting that the proper understanding of participation is participation as the end. The typology by White (2011) also suggests that the fullest and ultimate form of participation is transformative participation (leading to permanent change). Trevor Parfitt (2004: 554) approaches the topic in a slightly different way. He can see tensions resulting from the dual nature of participation (means/end), but he is of the opinion that these two perspectives do not have to be exclusive; they can even be complementary: *“participation is only significant and beneficial if we treat it both as a means to achieve an end and the end in itself.”* In this approach, different forms of participation may be complementary as long as we can find a balance between frequently contradictory interests, and if we have a critical attitude toward the performed tasks at each stage of the process. From this perspective, the instrumental approach to participation does not have to exclude the process of empowerment of the community. Sometimes the process occurs as an unintended effect of such participatory activities.

The main charges concerning participation do not really refer to the idea itself, but to its implementation. Bill Cook and Uma Kothari (2001) even call the participatory practices included in developmental programmes “the new tyranny”. The lack of theoretical foundation for the theory of endogenous development and the ambiguity of the concept of participation, combined with the susceptibility to manipulation and applying it in the social legitimization of practices, are the key serious charges against the idea. Still, we should remember that the abuse of participation was connected with its growing popularity and incorporation into main stream developmental policies (Penderis 2012). What, then, is the reason for the great popularity of participatory approaches? Apart from the need of more profound democratization of developmental measures, the success of participation had very practical reasons. Projects and programmes carried out with the use of participatory methods (such as PRA) had better effects than methods implemented top-down. And it is the practitioners who were implementing developmental programmes and projects who became the main supporters of including local communities, organizations, and institutions in the programmes (Chambers 1994).

Peter Oakley (1995) points out several key benefits that participation may contribute to:

- Efficiency: thanks to the inclusion of residents, resources for a programme/project can be much better used and adjusted to real needs; costs can also be reduced, e.g. thanks to residents’ labor.

- Effectiveness: a very frequent cause of failure to meet assumed goals was the lack of engagement of the local community. Participation not only makes it possible to plan the goals better, but also to obtain extra support and activate local resources with the aim of meeting them.

– Relying on your own strength and resources: this property is mostly connected with participation at the highest level, ensuring real empowerment of the community.

– Potential to engage a wide range of community members: participatory activities give an opportunity to include more people and entities from the area.

– Durability: including people in a project makes them feel responsible for it and thus treat the results of the project as an effect of their work and engagement, at least partially.

Oakley (1995) claims that effective institutionalization of the participatory approach at the level of national policies or international organizations in practice is extremely difficult, or even impossible. It is only at the level of local non-governmental organizations, which are small and flexible enough, that it is possible to reduce the discrepancy between the theory and practice of participation.

It is hard to imagine stimulation of endogenous development without the participation of the residents of the affected territory. Participation and the bottom-up approach have been the foundation of approaches such as LEADER. Yet, whether the participatory approach will give the expected effect largely depends on the quality of participation. This, in turn, is the product of many factors which cannot be imposed by means of a programme. To the contrary, excessive formalization and the number of requirements may ruin the chances for bottom-up activation. The aim of bureaucracy connected with institutions implementing LEADER in the European Union was to minimize the risk related to potentially improper and ineffective use of the transferred financial resources, by imposing specific rules and many instruments of control. Real participation, however, naturally means the reduction of external control and the transfer of real decision-making to local entities. On the other hand, it is vital to recognize the local specificity and ability of the community to assume such responsibility. Therefore, no universal method or recipe exists that would work in all situations.

In practice, no optimum form of participation can be forced. The scope and scale of participatory activities depend on the will and awareness of the institutions that implement the programme at the regional and local level. Whatever the form, participation is not magic and does not automatically make a programme succeed or solve all problems. There are many causes of the fact that implementing effective participation is not an easy task and that the results sometimes differ from the original assumptions or intentions. More participation is not always better, because the final assessment of the importance of participation depends on what kind of participation is meant, in what context, who implements it, and who the targets are.

To recapitulate, while the participatory approach does not guarantee success or the meeting of goals, the lack of such an approach or its poor quality is often a key reason for the failure of developmental programmes and projects. Participation is a process that requires time and effort from both sides to make the transition

from “beneficiaries” to “partners”. The experiences of countries from Central and Eastern Europe, which are undergoing a transformation from a centralized system to civic democracy, show that the process is a never-ending one. The changing conditions and new developmental challenges make it necessary to constantly redefine the partnership relationships between authorities and citizens.

2.2. Participation as the foundation of collaboration within the LEADER approach

The previous chapter presented the characteristics of participation and the difficulties involved in its practical implementation (also at the local level). The statements contained in strategy papers are difficult to fulfil, especially in communities with a low level of social capital, i.e. little potential for cooperation based on common norms and values, as well as little social trust. The phenomenon of participation in the LEADER approach can be analyzed in three dimensions. The first relates to the involvement of local community members in the activities of local action groups (LAGs) formed as part of the LEADER approach and involves, among others, a certain level of social activity, individuals’ engagement in the public sphere, as well as their knowledge of the public sector and the needs of the local community. The second dimension concerns relationships within the partnership, the participation of partners within the partnership, and its practical operation. The third dimension concerns the cooperation of local action groups with other local actors in the area of broadly understood development. In this chapter, we will tackle the second dimension of participation in the LEADER approach, focusing on the relationships of actors contributing to the local partnership,

The participatory nature of three-sector partnerships (such as LAGs) has not fully met the expectations placed in them. It was assumed that these entities would become rural development centers and innovation laboratories, as well as structures generating social capital (Dargan, Shucksmith, 2008; Shucksmith, 2000, Kołodziejczyk, 2003). It was hoped that networking, exchange of experiences, and pooling of the diverse resources of the representatives of the three sectors would bring tangible developmental and economic results. In addition, it was expected that active local communities, associated within cross-sector partnerships, would rationally and effectively manage local resources and thus contribute to endogenous development (Shucksmith 2000, Jacuniak-Suda, 2016; Mose 2003, 2010; Terluin 2003; Furmankiewicz 2006; Bosworth et al. 2016).

Doubts regarding the participatory nature of partnerships occurred from the beginning of the implementation of the LEADER approach, and the “participatory” and “partnership” nature of LAGs was questioned. In Poland, the very

design of the partnerships was problematic: they were perceived as superficial; dominated by the public sector; or simply copying local political, administrative, and social systems. The biggest problems in designing partnerships under the LEADER approach were: a) the formally participatory and inclusive nature of LAGs; b) formalizing partnerships at the stage of their establishment (obligatory participation by representatives of the three sectors) and further operation; c) unification of partnerships as a consequence of excessive formalization and dominance of the public sector (including decision-making and consultation).

Polish local action groups have become exclusive rather than inclusive structures. This exclusivity has been due to the low level of interest of individual and collective LAGs and the fictitious membership of individuals and organizations in local action groups (Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew, 2014, p. 171). Interest in the new form of rural cooperation was, in many cases, temporary, especially since the new solution proved difficult to implement and required both commitment and adherence to the restrictive rules of the LEADER approach. In practice, those who were most active and most knowledgeable about the LEADER program became the core of the partnerships. The other participants somewhat transferred the LAG-related responsibilities to the most active and most devoted group, remaining formal members of the LAG, and occasionally showing up at meetings only because it was necessary to reach a quorum for a specific decision (Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew, 2014, p. 168).

Similar trends were also observed for similar partnerships in other European countries. In local action groups, the narrow circle of the most active and interested individuals – or those who, due to their functions, were familiar with the implementation of the LEADER approach – would make the majority of the decisions. The latter group was usually made up of local administration employees delegated to LAGs by local authorities, and their participation in LAGs was associated with so-called “dual representation”. In small communities, local administration representatives had knowledge about the program and the competencies to meet the formal requirements for the establishment of LAG partnerships. Indeed, they represented the public sector, not the social sector as declared (Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014; Halamska, Michalska, Śpiewak, 2010; Furmankiewicz, 2013; cf. Osborne, Beattie, Williamson 2002). Furthermore, members of local partnerships themselves found it difficult to declare which sector they represented in the partnership.

In Poland local action groups have been considered to be dominated by local authorities, even though the formal framework adopted under LEADER was to provide protection against the dominance of the partnership by one of the sectors. The risk that local authorities or their representatives would want to take control of the newly established structure of LAG (especially at the initial stage of LEADER implementation) was not unfounded (Furmankiewicz, Królikowska 2010, p. 156–157). It was feared that local groups would become another development

instrument used by local authorities, which would enable the execution of public tasks and thus help the local budget. It is difficult to determine how LEADER's formal protective measures have prevented local authorities from completely overtaking LAGs. That solution was intended to ensure the tri-sectoral form of the partnership and include in its structure representatives of local communities, their social representation, and the economic sector (Furmankiewicz, Królikowska 2010, p. 157; Rizzo, 2009). The protection mechanism assumed under LEADER was unable to eliminate informal networking typical of small rural local communities (Halamska, Michalska, Śpiewak, 2010, p. 12).

The dominance of representatives of local authorities in the structure of sectoral partnerships was accompanied by the under-representation of the economic sector. This trend was typical of cooperative network structures established in Europe, both within LEADER (Macken-Walsh, Curtin, 2013, pp. 247–248; Bosworth et al. 2016, pp. 438–439) and under other rural development programs, such as the British “Single Regeneration Budget”, “The Market Towns Initiative”, “New Deal for Communities” (Smith, Mathur, Skelcher, 2006; p. 167; Caffyn 2004; Lawless 2007; Lawless, Foden, Wilson, Beatty, 2010), the Irish PRIDE, the Spanish PRODER (OECD 2009, p. 120), or the German Regionen Aktiv (OECD 2006; Moseley 2003). In Poland the results of independent studies carried out in different academic centers indicated a small proportion of representatives of the economic sector, clearly pointing to their low participation in the structure of the partnerships (Halamska, 2005; Kniec 2010; Halamska, Michalska, Śpiewak, 2010; Furmankiewicz 2011; Psyk-Piotrowska, Zajda, Kretek-Kamińska, Walczak-Duraj, 2013; Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014).

The exclusive nature of rural partnerships has largely forced the formal LEADER framework, which on one hand limits access to the full use of opportunities offered by LAGs (e.g., non-formal social organizations, including Farmers' Wives' Associations, or organizations without financial or human resources), and on the other, favored the use of the resources of the local elite capable of meeting formal requirements and strongly embedded in local systems. The “elitist” nature of local partnerships is not only a Polish problem, although the motivations for engaging in such structures varied: from a desire to take control of available resources and achieve economic benefits, to striving for positions and prestige in the local community (Kováč and Kučerová 2006; Bruckmeier 2000; Derksen, Bock 2009; Cloke et al., 2000). Partnership elitism and the limitation of its truly participatory nature had to do with the above-mentioned dual representation of LAG members. In practice, the problem of overlapping social and professional roles concerned public sector representatives and employees. This phenomenon is perceived negatively in Poland because the entire structure is subjected to local government authorities and their plans, whereas local governments are not seen as representing the interests of local communities. Little trust in local authorities maintains the existing division between “us” (local community) and “them”

(authorities). Thus, public sector overrepresentation is perceived as an “assault” on the independence and self-reliance of LAGs³ (Bosworth et al 2016, p. 432; Navarro, Woods, Cejudo, 2016).

However, without the involvement of local authorities, partnerships in the LEADER program would in many cases not have existed at all (Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew, 2014, p. 189–193). Due to the lack of experience in collaboration, limited knowledge and skills connected with project implementation and the devising of strategic documents, local authorities have in a way become the “natural” leaders in local partnerships (Kołomycew 2013, Zajda 2011, Knieć 2010). This does not mean, however, that they have no interest in taking advantage of the emerging opportunities provided by LEADER. On the contrary, for many rural authorities it has been a great opportunity to take measures aimed at local development.

Participation in the LEADER approach has also been limited by the overformalization of both the operation of LAGs themselves and the way they acquire funds. In many cases, LEADER has the opposite effect of discouraging local circles from action, or forcing them to impose formal restrictions only to be able to apply for financial support. As pointed out by Jan Herbst, it is not institutions but informal relations and networks, as well as mutual help, that foster collective activity in rural areas (Herbst 2008, p. 166). While the very idea of cross-sectoral partnerships did not raise concerns and was assessed positively, the formal aspects of partnerships’ operation have proven problematic (project re-financing, the long time for considering applications, the same requirements for small projects with small resources and multimillion Euro or zloty investment projects), which are largely independent of the members of partnerships themselves. Overformalization and bureaucratization of LEADER procedures in Poland has been a manifestation of distrust that those who applied for support would use their resources properly (Bukowski 2008). In spite of their decade-long presence in Poland, local action groups have not yet developed independent and true-partnership management methods, ways of activity and decision-making, social dialogue, exchange of elites, or a strategic approach to territorial development. Participation has been merely superficial.

Despite the formally partnership-like nature of LAGs, they have adopted a form of decision-making typical of local authority structures. Solutions similar to those of local authorities, were also adopted to inform LAG members and the local community about the current activities of the partnerships (Pawłowska,

³ Not all European countries have experienced such a trend. M. Kull’s comparative study on the implementation of the LEADER approach in Finland and Germany indicates that overrepresentation and dual representation (multi-positionality) of local government representatives were positively perceived in light of their knowledge and professional approach to partnership activities (Kull 2008, p. 205; Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew, 2014, p. 156).

Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew, 2014, p. 172). Consultations in the partnership structure were not common practice. These observations demonstrate, on one hand, the insufficient knowledge and competence of LAG members to form partnerships, and on the other, a small role in involving different individuals and groups in an organization's activities.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that LEADER's sectoral partnerships have not been fully participative in their nature. Referring to Sherryl Arnstein's conception of participation – described in detail in Chapter 2 – partnership (along with delegating mandate and civic control) is a real form of participation, as it is based on the dispersion of (some) power between actors outside the public sphere. And even though, in theory, that assumption motivated the LEADER partnerships, it has been more difficult to implement. The identified operational problems of sectoral partnerships – such as dominance of the public sector, low involvement of the business sector, excessive bureaucracy (which was even a factor excluding some partners from the partnership) weakened the participatory aspect of local groups. Nevertheless, LEADER has contributed significantly to social (and, to a lesser extent, economic) change by designing a tool for rural development, and creating conditions for cooperation and collaboration in the public sphere. And it is in this context that partnerships can be seen, according to the definition presented in Chapter 2 by Trevor Prafitt (2004), as both a means and an end. At the same time, the critical stance regarding the instrumental nature of partnerships such as LEADER-based LAGs should also be mitigated. Instrumentalism is not synonymous with the lack of subjectivity of the local community. In the case of many partnerships established in Poland and in other European countries the interference and dominance of the public sector has proved necessary to establish a partnership structure. The lack of collaborative experience and other constraints on the partners' side have been a barrier to bottom-up modeling of partnerships. At the same time, the educational dimension – especially in the first edition of LEADER – should be appreciated, as it helped local communities “learn” to cooperate and collaborate to support local development.

Chapter 3

SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN THE LEADER APPROACH

The LEADER approach implemented in European rural areas in previous programming periods proved to be so effective that it was decided to further implement its principles, not only in rural, but also in urban areas. The previous section of the publication discussed the issue of participation as part of the LEADER approach, and now we focus on the evaluation of activity of local action groups in terms of implementing the innovation principle, in particular, social innovations. We will present different definitions of innovation and describe the effects of research carried out in a purposely selected province (against the background of weak points of implementation of the LEADER approach in Poland previously discussed in source literature), concerning the activity of local action groups in implementing social innovations by now. The objective of the research was to identify projects that had the characteristics of social innovation (in accordance with the definition by the European Commission).

3.1. Social innovation: theory and practice

The principles of the LEADER approach are the territorial, bottom-up, integrated approach, local financing, local management, collaboration, and networking, as well as partnership and innovativeness. The latter of these has been very problematic for the evaluators of the LEADER approach and local action groups alike. It has been understood in different ways by different entities, which often leads to the trivialization of the importance of innovation. The innovative character of the LEADER approach can be analyzed from (at least) two perspectives. The first refers to the functioning of local action groups: territorial partnerships regarded as an example of social innovation, obligatorily including representatives of the social, economic, and public sectors who are willing (at least theoretically) to collaborate for the development of rural areas (see Neumaier 2012, Convery et al. 2010; Esparcia, Escribano, Serrano 2015, p. 29). The other one refers to projects implemented by local action groups, some of which may be innovative.

Following the definition proposed by the European Commission, innovative projects in the LEADER approach are those that are new, i.e. have not been carried out within the area supported by the local action group before (including projects promoting the formation of new social networks or assuming so-called collective investment); projects providing for the inclusion of new categories of beneficiaries in the process of rural development; the establishment of new businesses, especially innovative ones; as well as projects aimed at testing new solutions that have so far been absent from the areas supported by the partnership, e.g. technological ones, or projects oriented at the dissemination of innovation (LEADER Subcommittee Focus Group, 2010, p. 6). Such broad understanding of the innovativeness, combined with the need to “prove” the innovativeness of the implemented projects, has led to calling many projects innovative, even ones that did not have much in common with innovation, e.g., the construction of a new sidewalk or a playground in a village.

How are innovations defined in source literature? Granted, there are many definitions. But the authors of those definitions agree in identifying many types of innovation, such as technological, organizational, ecological, and social (Najder–Stefaniak 2010, pp. 14–15). The term “social innovations” first appeared in the narrative of European Union development in the middle of the year 2000. It especially referred to the future of the so-called welfare state, as the European Commission began to promote social innovations as an element of intervention policy oriented at new ways of solving social problems and responding to social challenges¹. It gained importance in 2008 thanks to *Renewed Social Agenda*, which tried to address the drawbacks of the Lisbon Strategy concerning solutions aimed at supporting the labour market and economic growth (Oosterlynck, Kazepov, Novy 2015, p. 14). The term “social innovations” was included in the narrative of development of the European Union in 2010, when the *Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA)* published a report “Empowering people, driving change. Social innovation in the European Union” (Bureau of European Policy Advisors, 2010). The document specifies the reasons for supporting social innovation (not only in the countries of the European Union). They include difficulties in solving social problems (unemployment, poverty, social isolation, ageing of the society) in a time of economic crisis, which on the one hand intensified those problems, and on the other, limited the resources that could be used to eliminate them. In the report it was admitted that the market was not interested in solving social problems if it was not financially profitable; in public institutions there was too much bureaucracy; and civic organizations (established in order to solve different social problems) often only carried out small-scale activities; and the services and products they offered were short-term and too frag-

¹ This does not mean that the term had not been used in scientific or colloquial discourse before.

mentary to ensure permanent effects (Bureau of European Policy Advisors 2010, p. 19–20). Therefore, supporting the implementation of social innovations was found necessary. It was emphasized that innovations could differ in character and represent different types. Grassroots social innovations (a response to the problems of specific vulnerable groups) are different from those addressed to the whole society (e.g. the Red Cross institution), and still different from system innovations: these are also designed for the whole society but instead of solving specific problems, they refer to fundamental changes in the attitudes, systems of values, and organizational structures (Bureau of European Policy Advisors BEPA 2010, p. 8).

The discussed report also provides a definition of social innovations, trying to explain its meaning, also with reference to specific examples. It explains that social innovations are new ideas (products, services, models) that are a response to social needs and drive new social relationships (Bureau of European Policy Advisors BEPA 2010, p. 24). But the definition did not facilitate the operationalization of the very term “social innovations”. Years later, researchers are still trying to determine its specificity, although some issues in the discussion seem to be unquestionable. First, there is no doubt that the term “social innovation” has clear normative connotations, as their implementation is connected with solving – or diminishing – existing social problems, and responding to different social needs or challenges. Making and implementing them is regarded to be proper, desirable, even necessary (Wittmayer et al. 2015, p.180).

Second, it is certain that social innovations are a kind or type of innovation distinct from others, such as technological or organizational innovations (including so-called *governance innovation*). Technological innovations are oriented at obtaining financial profit by introducing a new or improved product to the market. The goal of social innovations, however, is not financial profit, but rather solving or reducing social problems and responding to social challenges. Organizational innovations concentrate on solutions promoting greater efficiency of different organizational structures and the relationships between organizations and institutions. (In the case of *governance innovation* the goal is to implement solutions to improve the efficiency of activities taken e.g., by local authorities, or solutions to the efficiency of their collaboration with other organizations and institutions) (Anheier et al. 2014, p. 30). An important fact that makes the study of social innovations more interesting and more difficult is that the types of innovation are not disjunctive. Actually, they are interconnected. A social innovation may include elements of technological innovations, and the other way round. Organizational innovations are often combined with social or technological ones (ibidem, p. 30). Julie Caulier-Grice and co-workers emphasize (2012, p. 9) that looking for differences between different types of innovation is often not only very difficult but also unjustified, impractical.

Third, regardless of differences in the way of defining and operationalization of social innovations, it is assumed that the innovations are rooted in different social contexts and they affect those contexts (Caulier-Grice et al. 2012, p. 4).

Fourth, it is taken for granted that social innovations are made in some kind of collective structures. Literature concerning the subject mentions networks, clusters and systems, collectively referred to as the ecologies of innovation (Nicholls, Murdock 2012, Pel, Bauler 2014, p. 8). Different actors participate in different ecologies, so source literature emphasizes the need to apply a so-called multi-actor perspective in the analyses of social innovations. The actors can be

- 1) different sectors (public, private, and the third sector),
- 2) individuals acting as: citizens, consumers, or activists (see Haxeltine et al. 2015, p. 52).

Even the formation of collective structures (called *socially innovative initiatives*), especially long-term three-sector partnerships, is often interpreted as social innovation (Oosterlynck et al. 2013: p. 26).

Social innovations are not created without the involvement of citizens, their organizations, and various associations. They are the effect of a social interaction process, including four stages:

- 1) identifying social needs,
- 2) creating new solutions,
- 3) evaluating the efficiency of the solutions,
- 4) monitoring the efficiency in practice (Guide to Social Innovation 2013, p. 6).

The chances for implementing the social innovation process are related to social participation. Anna Davis, Julie Simon, Robert Partick and Will Norman explain this relation by pointing out:

- 1) the goal of social innovations, which is to satisfy social needs and to solve/reduce social problems, which requires their identification and defining by the stakeholders themselves, as they have the tacit knowledge about these needs not always shared with others,

- 2) reduction of the costs of creating and implementing innovations, connected with the participation of citizens, target groups of stakeholders interested in eliminating or solving their social problems,

- 3) resources generated thanks to social participation connected with tacit knowledge provided by stakeholders in the process of social creation of innovations (2012, p. 5–6).

What significance is attributed to social innovations, then? As already observed, researchers still refer to the definition proposed in the report of *Bureau of European Policy Advisors* discussed before, especially that it has been adopted by the European Commission. They highlight some of its aspects and discussed with others. Sometimes they propose alternative definitions.

“Novelty” is a characteristic of innovation that is often disregarded. The *Bureau of European Policy Advisors* has emphasized that novelty is relative: social

innovations do not need to be solutions used for the first time; they are new in the meaning of alternative to existing solutions and are considered to be more effective and better. The aspect of “novelty” of social innovations is for example disregarded in the definition by Stijn Oosterlynck et al. (2013, p. 3). “Social innovation in our understanding refers to locally embedded practices, actions and policies that help socially excluded and impoverished individuals and social groups to satisfy basic needs for which they find no adequate solution in the private market or macro-level welfare policies”.

Just like the *Bureau of European Policy Advisors*, they stress the fact that social innovations are only designed to meet social needs, but they focus on “basic” needs. Obviously, the problem is how to define basic needs, as pointed out by J. Caulier-Grice, A. Davies, R. Patrick and W. Norman, who propose defining social innovations in a slightly broader way, as innovations that meet social needs (not only basic ones) defined as those that need to be met to prevent a person from feeling deprived or excluded from the community (2012, p. 19). The reason for approaching social innovations from the perspective of meeting social needs (not basic social needs and not social problems) is that they cover more phenomena than those two categories. Moreover, the “social problem” or “basic social need” category may limit the target group to people who are excluded, stigmatized, or discriminated against. Giovany Cajaiba-Santana (2013, p. 44) explains that treating social innovations from the perspective of reducing social problems results from the tradition of considering their essence and meaning in the context of the development of social entrepreneurship dedicated to social problems and the communities of excluded, vulnerable, or disfavoured people.

For many authors, including Oosterlynck et al. (2013), just as for *BEPA*, another characteristic of social innovations is causing a change in social relations. In some definitions, the change of social relations is actually the core of social innovation. The authors of a research project “Transformative Social Innovation Theory” provide a number of practical examples of changing social relations in different aspects of social life. In the dimension of daily life, these are e.g., time banks, co-housing, or slow food². In the area of relations between citizens and authorities, it is participatory budgeting (Søgaard Jørgensen et al. 2016).

The foregoing brief review of source literature shows similarities, but also basic differences between the definitions of social innovations, connected with operationalization of the concept, i.e., translating definition elements into the language of empirical knowledge or research practice. Social innovations are territorially-rooted. They may work in some communities but not work in others (even seemingly similar). No two local communities are totally alike, so copying

² A time bank is an alternative way of satisfying social needs. The person who helps us satisfy them does not receive our money; instead, we offer them our skills and competencies in something else.

innovative projects will not always work. Implementing innovations is risky, but the lack of success does not mean failure, especially if the innovation is a response to a poorly diagnosed or “hidden” problem, because an attempt to reduce such a problem may cause protests and resistance from those who experience it. The implementation of a social innovation (regardless of how it is defined) is conditional on social participation understood as the participation of different social actors in the process. In Poland there is a phenomenon that we call in this publication “collective individualism”. It is manifested in limited readiness of different organizations and institutions (collective structures) to actually collaborate (in this sense, they prefer individualistic strategies in their activity). In our opinion, this phenomenon may be one of the most important barriers to the implementation of social innovations in Polish rural areas. Therefore, what is important when assessing social innovations is not only the perspective of the communities affected by certain social problems but also the perspective of the entities that want to counteract those problems.

3.2. Social innovations in previous activity of local action groups

An example of groups from Lubelskie Province

3.2.1. Methodology of original research (subject matter of the research, research method and techniques, characteristics of the object of research)

During the 2007–2013 programming period, the functioning of Local Action Groups was based on local development strategies. Their priorities included reducing the broadly understood problems of rural residents and responding to their needs.

The subject of this section of the work is the previous activity of those organizations aimed at implementing social innovations in rural areas, defined as new activities, alternative to those implemented so far, designed to solve the social problems of residents of communes supported by local action groups, which contribute to changing social relations in terms of:

- 1) relationships between the beneficiaries of support and their external environment,
- 2) relationships between different entities that aim to solve local social problems.

The authors looked for the answers to the following study questions:

- 1) What social problems did local action groups identify in their strategic documents?

2) Did they implement social innovations in the 2007–2013 programming period in response to those problems?

3) If so, did they do so independently or in cooperation with other entities? (What entities?)

Local action groups located in Lubelskie Province were chosen as the object of study³. The choice of province was motivated by its specific nature. 96.2% of its surface area is rural. The province has the highest proportion of people employed in agriculture. The traditional model of farming connected with small farms being kept in families is dominant here. The inhabitants of the province face many social problems. In the Social Policy Strategy of Lubelskie Province for the Years 2014–2020 poverty was identified as one of the crucial problems. It includes data showing that the Lublin region had a poverty risk index of 30.7%, the highest in Poland. It is here that the highest proportion of families benefit from social welfare. The earnings of residents are lower than those of people from other regions. It was mentioned in the strategy that poverty not only resulted from low earnings but also from unemployment. At the end of 2012, the unemployment rate was 14.1%, and 54.9% of all the unemployed were rural residents (Strategia Polityki Społecznej..., p. 9–12).

Another problem is the aging population of Lubelskie Province and the low participation of elderly people in social and professional life. It was pointed out in the strategy that: *Lubelskie Province is a region with one of the highest proportions of elderly people in the whole population, especially as regards people at post-productive age*. It was emphasized that it is a region with the highest proportion of people of post-productive age in the whole population, and 55% of the elderly live in rural areas (55%) (Strategia Polityki Społecznej..., p. 18). Social problems crucial for the socio-economic situation of the province also include the limited participation of disabled people in social and professional life. It was pointed out in the strategy that the province has the highest population of disabled people in Poland. These people experience different aspects of social exclusion, especially if they live in small towns or villages (Strategia Polityki Społecznej..., p. 30). The low level of social and civic activity of province residents is also pointed out. In this context, it was observed that: *Non-governmental organizations, especially in rural areas, are not strong and competent enough to inspire, initiate and carry out social activities to engage local residents. Therefore, they do not have enough potential to create partner relationships and collaborate with the local authorities. This is also related to the insufficient number of local social leaders. People from local communities display low civic activity and low awareness of the impact on the situation of the*

³ The study was part of the project “Social innovation systems in rural areas. Perspectives of public sector and non-governmental sector entities from Lubelskie Province” carried out under the supervision of Katarzyna Zajda in 2016 and financed with a subsidy from the University of Lodz for the development of young researchers.

local community (Strategia Polityki Społecznej..., p. 44). The strategy also mentioned the weakness of the social economy sector, which *is developing in difficult conditions due to the intensity of social problems* (Strategia Polityki Społecznej..., p. 49), and the highest ratio of emigration in Poland.

The case study method was applied in this research. Robert Yin defines this method as: "... an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (1989, p. 80). The research techniques were a structured interview with representatives of local action groups and an analysis of the content of local development strategies⁴.

At the stage of preparing the study, a letter was sent to each LAG with a request to appoint a person who could provide some information on the activity of the organization aimed at reducing social problems. We did not manage to contact three out of 23 local action groups, so 20 respondents took part in the study, and one interview was removed from the obtained material. The interviews lasted between 25 and 36 minutes⁵.

Basic information on local action groups in Lubelskie Province is included in the following table.

With the use of questions no. 2 and 3 in the above-mentioned research, the structured interview technique was used to find information on:

- 1) Issues that local action groups identified as social problems;
- 2) Communities that experienced those problems and received support from the local action groups;
- 3) Activities taken by those organizations in the 2007-2013 programming period in order to reduce problems, considering the novel and alternative character of the actions;
- 4) Experience of local action groups in activity aimed at solving those social problems;
- 5) Independent vs. collective/network activities aimed at solving those problems;
- 6) Potential impact of the implemented projects on changing social relations of the local action group with other local institutions and organizations.

⁴ In this book we only present a fragment of the research. Structured interviews were also conducted with representatives of non-governmental organizations from the province (a total of over 230). In other words, the application of structured interview technique was justified, not only by the subject of the study, but also by the numerical strength of the sample, not only made up of local action groups. However, in this study we do not use quantitative analysis because of the low number of respondents: one representative of each organization, usually its president or office worker, talked about the activity of local action groups.

⁵ Given the reports from previous research (especially the study by Katarzyna Zajda of 2012), it was assumed that the questions asked of respondents would not directly refer to social innovations. Innovations are mostly associated with new technological products, so it was unlikely that respondents would be interested in the topic of an interview formulated in that way.

Tab. 8. Basic information on local action groups in Lubelskie Province

No.	name of local action group	number of supported communes		date of establishing	surface area	population	number of entities			
		total	including rural and urban/rural communes				public sector	economic sector	social sector	total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	„Lokalna Grupa Działania Ziemi Kraśnickiej” Association	9	1 urban/rural	02.09.2008	979 km ²	62,961	22	13	64	99
2	„Poleska Dolina Bugu” Association:	8	1 urban	10.03.2006	1,196 km ²	40,139	11	17	41	69
3	„Leśny Krąg” Local Action Group Association	7	2 urban/rural	13.04.2006	875 km ²	47,296	30	40	86	156
4	„RAZEM KU LEPSZEJ PRZYSZŁOŚCI” Local Action Group	10	1 urban	27.05.2008	1,358 km ²	78,568	18	20	58	96
5	Local action group for the development of communes from Lublin powiat „KRAJNA WOKÓŁ LUBLINA”	15	2 urban/rural	16.04.2008	1,599 km ²	143,535	18	18	32	68
6	„Ziemia Zamojska” Local Action Group Association	9	-	21.08.2008	1 50 km ²	50,021	16	17	45	78
7	„G6 Grzędy Sokalskiej” Association	6	2 urban/rural	20.07.2006	716 km ²	30,569	11	12	14+69	106
8	„Krasnystaw PLUS” Local Action Group Association	10	1 urban	27.10.2008	1031 km ²	66,559	21	23	74	118
9	„Zapiecek” Local Action Group Association	8	1 urban	14.05.2008	965 km ²	60,870	13	18	43	74
10	„Polesie” Local Action Group Association	9	1 urban/rural	07.11.2008	111691km ²	63,771	no data available	no data available	no data available	no data available
11	„Ziemia Biłgorajska” Local Action Group	13	2 urban/rural	08.07.2008	1644 km ²	75,178	19	18	42	79
12	„Owocowy Szlak” Local Action Group Association	7	2 urban/rural	11.05.2006	810 km ²	61,803	15	55	93	163
13	„Zielony Pierścień” Local Action Group	11	1 urban, 2 urban/rural	03.03.2008	965 km ²	73,052	25	27	87	139

Tab. 8. (cont.)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14	„Lepsza Przyszłość Ziemi Ryckiej” Local Action Group Association	6	1 urban, 1 urban/rural	10.09.2008	615 km ²	58,080	10	27	75	112
15	Nasze Roztocze LAG	6	4 urban/rural	28.04.2008	837 km ²	60,196	12	13	51	76
16	Hrubieszów Association “Lepsze Jutro” Local Action Group	7	1 urban	24.02.2006	1138 km ²	61,663	no data available	no data available	no data available	65
17	„Dolina Giełczwi” Local Action Group Association	5	1 urban/rural	25.08.2008	565 km ²	42,062	9	11	37	57
18	„Ziemia Chełmska” Local Action Group	8	-	09.09.2008	983 km ²	32,965	16	30	54	100
19	Promenada S12 Local Action Group	6	1 urban	11.08.2008	775 km ²	42,074	12	40	72	123
20	„Doliną Wieprza i Leśnym Szlakiem” Local Action Group	10	1 urban/rural	12.12.2008	1046 km ²	58,738	21	25	43	89
21	Biała Podlaska Local Action Group	19	2 urban	12.06.2006	2755 km ²	113,336	21	25	25+25	96
22	„Roztocze Tomaszowskie” Local Action Group	6	1 urban	17.09.2008	765 km ²	37,177	12	17	69	98
23	Jagiellońska Przystań Local Action Group Association	7	2 urban/rural	21.11.2008	902 km ²	38,773	23	25	66	114

Source: Original study based on the analysis of documents drawn up by local action groups valid in the 2014–2020 period, and the Local Development Strategy for the “G6 Grzędy Sokalskiej” Area.

Given the adopted definition of social innovations, it was assumed that the activity of local action groups aimed at implementing the social innovations would be proved by carrying out projects:

- 1) whose goal is to solve social problems,
- 2) which involve activities regarded as alternative to those taken before,
- 3) whose implementation could contribute to changing relations between local action groups and other entities (local organizations and institutions) trying to solve social problems. The change of those relations would involve the formation of lasting cooperation potential between those entities and a transition from collective individualism (manifested in independently approaching various local problems) to collaboration in order to solve them.

Change in this area of social relations was pointed out because of the assumption that representatives of local action groups delegated to talk to us would be able to evaluate after some time the impact of the activities on the potential for their cooperation with other institutions and organizations. The advantage of that evaluation was that their opinions were not based on official indices that often only show the activities taken by local action groups in a positive light (which is usually vital for the clearance of the grant received). Local action groups do not monitor the future lives of the beneficiaries of their support. The impact of their activities on changing the relationships between those people and the broadly understood environment would be more difficult to assess, as it would be based on views and opinions about projects carried out even a few years earlier. Furthermore, social problems cannot be solved with a single project (that is why in the publication we use terms such as solving and reducing social problems). Each problem has many causes, and each person who experiences a problem is different. Without monitoring their lives and thoroughly diagnosing their situation, it would be hard for respondents to define clearly the connection between those people's present situations and their participation in the project.

Using content analysis of local development strategies, we looked for information on social problems experienced by the inhabitants of the area supported by each local action group. The problems described in the documents were the background for analysis of respondents' opinions on the subject.

3.2.2. Results of original research

In the 2007–2013 programming period, the vast majority of the investigated local action groups from the Lublin Province were implementing projects whose goal was to solve various social problems. Interestingly, in the respondents' opinion, the role of those organizations was not to respond to such problems. One of them said: "We are not trying to make the unemployed or socially and professionally excluded people happy. Our activity is completely different: it is promoting

the development of tourism". Another respondent expressed a similar opinion, saying that "We as a LAG do not engage in carrying out projects aimed at solving social problems. We finance other projects. But as I think about the ones we finance, they mostly focus on investments. As for the soft ones, it's organizing conferences or publishing something". According to a third respondent, local action groups typically carried out so-called "hard" projects in the previous programming period, concerning broadly understood infrastructure, and in his opinion the inhabitants of the area supported by the organization did not have any social problems. Those respondents emphasized that the goals of local action groups had changed: in the current programming period (2014-2020), community-led local development strategies included support for disfavoured groups; diagnosing local social problems was their indispensable element: "In the future, we will deal with strictly social projects designed to help disfavoured groups. As a LAG, we carry out collaboration projects, but these are strictly social projects. For example, now we will focus on volunteer work."

On the one hand, these respondents' utterances do not comply with the content of local development strategies, because each of the analyzed documents mentioned some social problems. So-called hard projects, such as reactivation of a rural community center, are also a response to a social problem identified e.g. as: "Shortage or undercapitalization of facilities that can be the centers of life and activity of rural residents (clubs, community centers, sports facilities, culture centers, libraries, or playgrounds)". But on the other hand (following the constructionist approach), there is no objective reality of social problems, a catalogue that everybody should know and understand. True, the respondents, who actively participate in the work of local action groups, should know the fundamental strategic document, but they do not have to agree with its content and the definition of social problems presented therein. Local development strategies were prepared in conformity to the commonly accepted top-down model, which presumably is to unify and simplify the work of both local action groups and the institutions or persons assessing the effects of their work. Obviously, the manual and guidebook include some suggestions concerning a bottom-up approach and local specificity, but as we can see even from a simplified analysis of the social problems presented in Table 9, as diagnosed by local action groups, many of them are a copy of what has also been found in other partnerships⁶. This evokes some doubts concerning the authenticity of the documents, i.e., whether they are really a response to problems faced by residents of the areas supported by local action groups, however they are understood⁷.

⁶ The list of the problems was usually presented in the "SWOT analysis" section of the strategy or the "Socio-economic evaluation of the area" section.

⁷ We were not able to find some of the strategic documents, because the local action groups have deleted them from the websites and did not make them available at the researchers' request.

Tab. 9. Description of diagnosed social problems included in local strategies for development of local action groups

No.	Name of local action group	Description of diagnosed social problems included in LDSs
	1	2
1	„Leśny Krąg” Local Action Group Association	Considerable proportion of young people among the unemployed The area has a high level of unemployment – the unemployment rate is higher than the mean for Lubelskie Province and the national mean in the same period. Many of the unemployed are young people.
2	“RAZEM KU LEPSZEJ PRZYSZŁOŚCI” Local Action Group	Poor level of education of residents: high proportion of people with vocational or elementary education Relatively low proportion of working-age population Shortage or undercapitalization of facilities that can be the centers of life and activity of rural residents (clubs, community centers, sports facilities, culture centers, libraries, or playgrounds) Poor labor market situation (high unemployment, including hidden unemployment, no alternative workplaces out of agriculture)
3	Local action group for the development of communes from Lublin powiat „KRAINA WOKÓŁ LUBLINA”	Low income of residents and a high level of dependence on the social sphere Poorly developed entrepreneurship and low competitiveness, investment capabilities and innovativeness of enterprises High level of poverty and social exclusion Unsatisfactory social activity and level of collaboration between residents and other entities, especially those that represent different socio-economic sectors
4	„Ziemia Zamojska” Local Action Group Association	Low education level Negative balance of migration of active and well-educated people Progressing impoverishment of the community – high proportion of households only dependent on pensions
5	„Krasnystaw PLUS” Local Action Group Association	For many years, unemployment has been the greatest social problem in the area of implementation of the LDSs Other problems are: Few non-agricultural workplaces, migration of young people to find a source of income, poor demographic structure, aging of the society, low population density, low education level of residents
6	„Zapiecek” Local Action Group Association	Poor level of education of residents: high proportion of people with vocational or elementary education Negative birth rate Relatively low proportion of working-age population Shortage or undercapitalization of facilities that can be the centers of life and activity of rural residents (clubs, community centers, sports facilities, culture centers, libraries, or playgrounds) Poor labor market situation (high unemployment, including hidden unemployment, no alternative workplaces out of agriculture)

Tab. 9. (cont.)

	1	2
7	„Polesie” Local Action Group Association	Emigration of young, educated people
		Low engagement of the community in local matters
		Low level of social self-organization
		No social integration
		Social pathologies, e.g., alcohol abuse
		Few places suitable for social gatherings or entertainment
		Few cultural events
		High unemployment level
		Population decline
		Growing number of people of post-productive age
		Low popularity of volunteer work
8	„Ziemia Biłgorajska” Local Action Group	Low level of education of residents
		Negative birth rate
		Relatively low proportion of working-age population
		Shortage or undercapitalization of facilities that can be the centers of life and activity of rural residents (clubs, community centers, sports facilities, culture centers, libraries, or playgrounds)
9	„Owocowy Szlak” Local Action Group Association	Poor labor market situation (high unemployment, including hidden unemployment, no alternative workplaces out of agriculture, seasonal work, unfavorable sector structure of employment)
		Low level of education of residents, especially older ones
		Shortage or undercapitalization of facilities that can be the centers of life and activity of rural residents (clubs, community centers, sports facilities, culture centers, libraries, or playgrounds)
10	„Lepsza Przyszłość Ziemi Ryckiej” Local Action Group Association	Low income of residents and progressing unemployment
		No perspectives for young people
		Unfavorable demographic balance resulting from population decline
11	Hrubieszów Association “Lepsze Jutro” Local Action Group	Poor social and cultural infrastructure in rural areas
		Low attractiveness of the area for its inhabitants, resulting in increasing economic emigration
		Low level of residents’ education
12	“Dolina Giełczwi” Local Action Group Association	Unfavorable demographic phenomena causing a decrease in population of the area, such as economic emigration of young people
		Unemployment
		Low social engagement of a considerable part of residents in cultural or tourist projects

Tab. 9. (cont.)

	1	2
13	Promenada S12 Local Action Group	Unemployment is the greatest social problem in the diagnosed area
		No social leaders
		Low level of civic engagement
		Insufficient promotion of good practices in the activity of non-governmental organizations
		Isolated and closed groups within local communities
		Insufficient and unattractive base for social activity
		Limited educational opportunities for children
		No kindergartens in rural areas, demanding attitudes, and low level of social creativity
		Low income and poor economic situation of residents
		Low level of residents' self-organization
14	"Doliną Wieprza i Leśnym Szlakiem" Local Action Group	Unemployment
		Low income of residents and high proportion of people at risk of social exclusion
		Low level of education of residents, preventing them from engaging in economic activity and limiting their activity
15	Biała Podlaska Local Action Group	Low level of education of the unemployed
		Hidden unemployment
		No support and entertainment for adolescents
		No engagement of adolescents in the life of their local communities
		Low level of engagement in the process of continuing education and renewing qualifications
16	„Roztocze Tomaszowskie” Local Action Group	Low social activity among adolescents
		Disappearing bonds between neighbors
		Insufficient number of local leaders and local culture organizers
		Insufficient number of local initiatives, lack of self-confidence
		Low level of key competencies
		Low level of residents' education

Source: original study based on local strategies of development of local action groups.

The variety of examples of social problems provided by respondents was great, although local development strategies obviously presented more. This is totally understandable, because respondents were asked about what they thought was the most important project designed to reduce social problems (the research tool is presented in the appendix). They mentioned youths' anormative behaviours, their social exclusion, the problem of available leisure time offerings, the low linguistic competence of children and adolescents, unemployment, and the low social activity of local residents. Other problems were the residents' low awareness of healthy lifestyle or cultural heritage (including cuisine). The lack of tourist products making an area unique was also mentioned as a social problem.

The target groups for support by local action groups in the crucial projects devoted to reducing social problems were school students, 60+ -year-olds, and the long-term unemployed, but also residents of the area in general, especially if the project was focused on cultural heritage, social activation, or the promotion of tourism.

It must be noted that only six respondents said that the local action group had previous experience in activity aimed at reducing such social problems. According to the other thirteen respondents, action was being taken for the first time. As pointed out earlier in the work, the definition of social innovations by the European Commission (quoted many times before) aroused a lot of controversy because of attributing novelty to them. However, we need to remember the meaning of the definition: in this case, 'new' means different, an alternative to the common, most often applied solutions, models, practices, etc. In other words, the fact that local action groups did not carry out projects devoted to the described social problems does not mean that they were not social innovations. The alternative character of the projects can be proved by the means of action chosen in them, different from the one applied earlier by the organization or by other entities, that are for it a source of information on examples of activities aimed at reducing those problems.

Why does experience in implementing projects devoted to a certain social problem facilitate the implementation of social innovations? To answer this question, we need to point out that it enhances the opportunities to activate a reflective attitude understood as a critical view of schemes for the creation and interpretation of social reality. Social innovation begins with objections to what is commonly applied but ineffective. In the context of well known and thoroughly studied problems, its core is to introduce an alternative which we can (preferably rightly) expect to help reduce the problem in a more effective way. If the organization is implementing a project for the first time, a reflective attitude must be based on examples of reducing those problems known to it. The reflective attitude may either confirm that the organization should repeat the previously applied solutions or generate objections to the reality. The latter variant is the determinant for implementing social innovations. But what if the organization diagnoses a social problem and proposes a solution that is alternative in the view of the organization but proves to be commonly used by other organizations? In other words, what if the belief in the alternative character of the proposed solution is a result of the lack of knowledge that it is already being widely applied by others? Social innovations are always rooted in a socio-cultural-economic context. What may prove to be innovative in one context is not innovative in another. Yet, this contextuality refers to specific socio-spatial structures. Knowing them is the basis for the reflective attitude and the proposed solutions. In other words, not knowing what is going on within a single socio-spatial structure (in this case, a partnership) does not justify referring to new projects as innovative. In order to call them innovative, it is necessary to refer and compare them to others.

The local action groups that already had some experience in carrying out projects devoted to the same social problem had applied similar activities in the past. Thus, either they are so effective that they have been continued, or the reflective potential of local action groups has not been activated yet, so it is hard to attribute this property of social innovations to the projects described by the respondents. Their declarations show that the activities proposed in the projects were typical not only for them but also for other local action groups.

Because of the problem of “the lack of a tourist product”, one entity organized a bicycle festival,⁸ and another, a wild strawberry festival. The inventory of activities taken in the described projects by local action groups included cooking workshops, handicraft workshops, marking a canoeing route, creating a website on natural and cultural attractions, marking out nordic walking routes, rural festivities, professional traineeships, career counseling, local initiative contests, psychotherapeutic workshops, study visits, school trips to the countryside, language courses, summer camps, foreign language song contests, and the renovation of a rural community center. The fact that the activities taken within the framework of these projects are not “alternative” does not rule out their value. As we already mentioned in the previous section, social innovations are associated with normativism. In the discourse concerning broadly understood public policies (including the policy of coherence and the policy of rural development) the terms innovativeness and innovations are accompanied by the belief that they should be implemented. Such prescriptive expressions generate the unnecessary attempts to call at least some of the projects innovative and fit the demands of many strategic documents, so as to prove that we not only know and understand them but also agree with them and want to promote them in our activity. Many years ago, such activities were called apparent actions by Jan Lutyński. They are superficial, illusory, and fictitious. In other words, the activities only appear to be aimed at making the social reality meet the desired model. Apparent actions are defensive and taken for show, and an example of such activities is those that only exist on paper (Lutyński 1990, Zajda 2012).

In the previous part of the chapter we observed that social innovations are usually made in collective structures. Agreements, consortiums and partnerships facilitate their implementation. They are a network that is able to intensify the flow of different types of capital – human, social, and economic. The first two are necessary to implement social innovations, and the latter is desirable, although social innovations are not as capital-intensive as technological innovations.

⁸ This is how one of the respondents related the festival: “We co-organized the ‘Bicycle Festival’, the greatest cycling event in Poland. 13 thousand people took part. Such activities have never been taken by communes. We also want to better equip canoeing positions and create a website for them.”

A network may generate more examples of different ways of coping with social problems; this way it is a platform facilitating the creation of alternatives.

Collective structures may be formal or informal. What is much more important than their level of formality is that they are real, they function in practice, and are not only another example of superficial activity existing as long as the subsidized project exists. Studies by many authors quoted in this publication have proved that the implementation of the LEADER approach (not only in Poland) has been connected with many problems resulting from the low cooperation potential of the representatives of the three sectors that made the local action group. They resulted in superficial activity, e.g., in the form of documents proving that the organization had hundreds of members, mostly from the social sector. Carrying out a project devoted to reducing social problems within a so-called partnership is another surface activity.

As many as 12 out of 16 respondents⁹ declared that, as part of their projects, local action groups tried to solve social problems in collaboration with other local entities. The partners were sports clubs, the board of education, local non-governmental organizations, culture centers, communal offices, forest divisions, and a national park. They also collaborated with other local action groups, mostly in the case of implementing projects financed by resources allocated for the implementation of so-called cooperation projects. In half the cases, collaboration was the effect of previous collaboration with the same entities. In the other half, the partners were new. More than half of the respondents (8) declared that the collaboration occurred both in the phase of project preparation and its implementation, but when evaluating the declarations we need to remember the normative character of evaluating the character of relations with other local entities, prescribing that "you need to collaborate", or at least declare so in response to the questions of an anonymous researcher.

The process of preparing projects may testify to the quality of the collaboration. If it is prepared by all the partners, or if at least the leader consults one version with them, it puts the structure in a good light and allows to conclude that the process of forming a partnership is occurring within the local system. If the project leader fails to consult their intentions with the partners, it means that the entities are *de facto* not partners, and the very idea of partnership is misunderstood and only serves to engage in surface activities. Only two respondents admitted that the project had been prepared exclusively by the leader (usually the local action group), but the leader had consulted the effects of their work with the partners. One respondent said that the organization had prepared the project independently, without any consultation. In the other cases, the respondents declared

⁹ Out of 19 respondents whose responses were analyzed, three persons declared that local action groups had not been acting for the reduction of social problems in the previous programming period. Such a declaration meant that the interview was over.

there had been collaboration between all the partners at the stage of project preparation. On the one hand, such declarations may point to the real character of partnership, but on the other hand there is an impression that the term ‘partnership’ is another desirable example of project newspeak, used especially in response to questions from quite an anonymous researcher who calls from an obscure university and asks about the details of the implemented projects, whose purpose the respondent does not know exactly.

The desire to continue collaboration may also testify to its quality. The respondents’ declarations show that collaboration initiated during the projects has continued. This does not always refer to projects dedicated to social problems. But when assessing the declarations, we should not quickly draw optimistic conclusions. What may be the potential reasons for that? For example, we can reduce it to the situation of the efficiency of the partnership’s activity in terms of the projects, good communication between all the partners, everything that social sciences call social capital (i.e. the potential of cooperation based on shared norms and values and social trust). But we can also imagine a situation that the partnership lasts because contacts between the partners are relatively not burdensome and there is an illusory division of responsibilities, resulting from the belief that all the tasks will be efficiently performed by the leader and the partners will agree to all the proposals and sign the required documents in time. Without in-depth research (e.g., the use of non-participant or participant observation) it is hard to be sure which situation really did take place in the analyzed partnerships.

Thus, on the basis of the collected material, it is hard to assess properly the impact of the projects implemented by local action groups on changing the relations between local entities, connected with the perspective of forming real and lasting partnerships. In our opinion, the respondents’ declarations (in many cases, very optimistic) should be compared to the real situation using tools proper not only for sociology but also for psychology, since the declarations may not reflect the reality. Besides, we should take into consideration a number of different variables, which may be of importance for the formation of local partnerships, from the attitudes of local leaders toward each other, up to the general condition of social capital of the residents. The low cooperation potential among Poles is along with other reasons, the effect of our history. (As we see it) we may not even hope that the few years of implementing the LEADER approach (nowadays referred to as Community-Led Local Development) will make a big change. Building local partnerships is a long-term process, perhaps taking decades.

The same refers to activating communities that are experiencing social problems, which may be expressed in their participation in the process of creating a project. This, of course, does not mean that such activities should not be taken or that they are doomed to failure. As already mentioned, one feature of social innovations is causing or influencing social changes, including those that occur between communities that experience social problems and their external environment.

That environment includes different entities that (at least by assumption) assist them. Changing relations in that regard may involve changing the image of the beneficiaries of support, who are no longer supplicants or customers but partners in solving their problems, who are invited to consultations, and whose opinions expressed in talks are taken into consideration – there is no longer a single appropriate course of action or pattern of activities that “have to” be taken to help “these sorts of people”. The talk or discussion can obviously be very difficult and problematic, and even for this reason the policy of empowering local communities based on it (being the basis of Community-Led Local Development) may arouse the objection of many local entities, including local authorities. It is easier (and seemingly more effective) to decide for someone, and to present them a ready plan of action (to be accepted or rejected) than to collaborate in developing different scenarios of possible projects.

Half the respondents declared that the beneficiaries of support had participated to some extent in preparing the projects. Typical statements were: “Parents themselves asked for a project for their children” or “We had informal talks with the beneficiaries, during which they told us about their needs”. This is both a lot and too little. Local action groups are in fact obliged to consider residents’ opinions in their strategic documents, to diagnose their needs, and in that context to plan their activities from the very beginning. Participation is a desired characteristic of the strategic documents and any activities connected with implementing them. However, as a brief analysis of the social problems mentioned in local development strategies shows their literal recurrence in many partnerships, the implementation of participation needs to be approached with great caution. What is the point of diagnosing local social problems with many study techniques if the same persons always take part in those studies? These are e.g. local activists who use the Internet to read the announcements of local action groups online. What is the point of distributing hundreds of copies of a questionnaire if the selection of respondents is completely random and the study sample is not representative at all? In this way we are bound to ignore many problems concerning individuals who live within the partnership area as well but who do not inform local action groups of their needs. There is a danger that the activity of local action groups will be devoted to the problems of only some people living with the partnership area, e.g. those who are less troublesome, while others will be ignored. This definitely does not promote inclusive development, the prevention of social exclusion, etc.

To sum up, critical analysis of the collected material concerning projects selected by local action groups shows that they have not yet implemented social innovations. True, they have dealt with social issues in their activity, they have tried to fight some social problems independently or in collaboration with other entities, but that activity did not have an alternative character with regard to commonly used practices. It is also hard to evaluate their effectiveness in terms of their long-term impact on social change in the area of cooperation potential of different

local organizations and institutions. Secondary data does not help much, as it is often produced so as to show a positive image of collaboration. Standardized study techniques are not useful, either, because it can rightly be expected that respondents feel “obliged” to declare collaboration. There is nothing surprising in this, or in the fact that real partnership in many cases is fiction, which does not result from bad will but from the low level of social capital of Poles and the specific “entrepreneurship” manifested in choosing different strategies whose goal is to prove that we have successes (as one of the respondents said, “here everything must be OK”). What we would like to strongly emphasize is that the lack of social innovations, or local action groups investing various resources in projects whose goals are not innovative, is not wrong in itself, if we can legitimately assume that the use of ready, tested solutions is effective and can really help (in the long run) to reduce the existing social problems.

Chapter 4

COMMUNITY-LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AS A NEW INSTRUMENT BASED ON THE LEADER APPROACH

4.1. Principles of Community-Led Local Development

The introduction of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 made “territorial cohesion” one of the key aims of the European Union in addition to existing aims such as social and economic cohesion. Given this new context, new regional policy instruments were launched for the 2014–2020 budget period in order to place emphasis on an integrated approach to development in the form of Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (Nurzyńska 2014). Unlike ITI, Community-Led Local Development is not a new idea, as it is a continuation of the LEADER approach used currently, and in the past, in rural areas. What is new about the new form of CLLD relative to the old form is the implementation of projects by urban centers by combining funding from several sources. The outcome has been the emergence of a single instrument – financed by up to four different sources: (1) the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), (2) the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), (3) the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and (4) the European Social Fund (ESF). However, the use of CLLD is mandated only in the case of EU Common Agricultural Policy – at least 5% of funds from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development must be spent on CLLD. In other cases, each individual member state decides whether to employ CLLD¹.

The rules for implementing CLLD in Poland were set in a document dated April 2014, formulated by Poland’s Ministry of Infrastructure and Development. The title of the document was: Rules for the implementation of the instrument “Community-Led Local Development in Poland” (2014). The document outlines and defines the scope of funding and program involvement in the implementation

¹ In Poland: EAFRD in rural areas, EMFF in fisheries areas, ESF and ERDF for the country as a whole, depending on the decision of each individual local government in each province of the country.

of CLLD, the thematic scope of CLLD, its geographic extent, formulating and financing Local Development Strategies, and the degree of participation in CLLD, an important element in itself.

The most important documents outlining the rules for applying CDLD in Poland include Partnership Agreements, National Agricultural Law, and joint directives applicable to CLLD. Various forms of CLLD implementation are permitted. This instrument is implemented directly only within the framework of EAFRD and EMFF. The manner of its implementation may be direct, indirect, or mixed-type in the case of ESF and ERDF – both within the framework of Regional Operational Programs developed for each given province (Polish: voivodeship)².

Rules and guidelines for CDLD implementation do not differ for rural and urban areas and remain consistent with rules and guidelines provided in the 2007–2013 budget period. The only difference concerns the geographic area of the LAGs. CDLD in rural areas is based on the following rules:

1. Population range affected by local development strategy (LDS): 30,000–150,000;
2. The basic administrative unit of the LDS in an area with one LAG is the municipality;
3. An LDS should encompass at least two separate municipalities (Polish: gminas);
4. The boundary between LDS implementation areas cannot cut across municipality limits, but does not have to be consistent with the boundaries of counties.

Exceptions to these rules affect LDSs financed exclusively by Regional Operational Programs designed for cities with more than 20,000 residents. In such cases:

1. The implementation of an LDS in only one municipality or just one part of it – a district or part of a district – is permitted;
2. The minimum population covered by an LDS is 20,000 residents, regardless of whether the considered area is a whole city, one city district, or groups of city districts.

Despite the positive reception the LEADER program has received in communities across the EU, as measured by its expansion into urban areas, its implementation in Polish cities is fairly rare. The LEADER program for urban areas has been thus far implemented only in one province – Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province. However, even in this case, despite favorable conditions for implementation in the

² More information available in the document: Rules for the implementation of the instrument “Community-Led Local Development in Poland” (at: https://www.minrol.gov.pl/.../ZASADY_REALIZACJI_RLKS_02_04_20...). https://www.minrol.gov.pl/.../ZASADY_REALIZACJI_RLKS_02_04_20...).

form of formulation and approval at the regional operational program level, utilization of this program is limited in practice.

A total of 28 LAGs were established in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province for the period 2014–2020, which includes just 7 urban LAGs. The urban LAGs in the province are as follows:

- Local Action Group Association “City of Brodnica”
- Local Action Group Association “Chelmno”
- Local Action Group Association “Grudziadz Granary”
- Local Action Group Association “For the City of Torun”
- Local Action Group Association “Inowroclaw”
- Bydgoszcz Local Action Group Association “Two Rivers”
- Local Action Group “Wloclawek”.

The short period of operation of these LAGs does not make it possible to evaluate the effects of their work, except to compare the composition of local action groups and current local strategies of development. These do not clearly indicate any meaningful differences and do not make it possible to draw conclusions about expected results. Such comparisons will be possible, at the very earliest, once the current budget period ends in late 2020. A more complete picture of outcomes will most likely be possible much later.

4.2. Functioning of cross-sector partnerships in cities – experiences and conclusions for Community-Led Local Development

4.2.1. Cross-sectoral partnerships in cities

One of the main reasons for establishing a rural partnership system in the case of the LEADER approach was the pursuit of local community activation and the use of existing resources in the neo-endogenic development of those areas (Gorlach 2004, pp. 150–160). It was assumed that bottom-up activities of the local community, represented by people coming from different backgrounds, would contribute to creating an involved and responsible civil society; the partnership itself would be the instrument of public participation and involvement in the immediate environment. Co-operation in urban areas was perceived, above all, as an opportunity for more effective problem-solving. In addition, the turn toward partnerships as a new tool for implementing urban policies was largely related to the economic crisis and the need to find alternatives to inefficient urban budgets (Pierre 1998; Walzer, York 1998). The global economic crisis of the 1970s triggered a number of changes in the functioning of cities and their residents. The consequence of the high cost of living in urban areas resulted in migration to the suburbs and thus relocation of existing urban centers (including changing their

functions), as well as the need to organize a new public service delivery system. It also saw the appearance of new ways of doing business, which has become much more mobile and location-independent (“delocalized”) (Logan, Molotoch, 2011; Heidenreich 1998). The emergence of new professions, and the associated growing social mobility, have contributed to an increase in disparities between cities, with the development of some and the simultaneous deterioration and economic stagnation of others (e.g. industrial cities that started losing their previous functions) (Pierre 2000, p. 187).

These changes contributed to the search for a new governance model in the public sector, which became the new public management in the 1970s (Bevir, Rhodes 2003; Osborne, Gaebler 1992, Rhodes 1996). With the growing popularity with the growing popularity and dissemination of this governance model in both the United States and other developed democracies, sectoral partnerships became the key instrument for public policy and public service delivery (Klijn Edelenbos, Hughes 2007, p. 71). The first urban partnerships were founded by representatives of the private and public sectors. Their aim was not so much to solve the cities’ social problems, but rather supply their budgets with private sector funding. The operation of sectoral (i.e. public-private) partnerships, which have become the leading instrument of urban governance, entailed a number of issues, such as organization of the partnership structure, responsibility for the tasks, cost-sharing, and the dominance of urban structures by the private sector (Beauregard 1989, Friedland 1982, Ohemeng, Grant 2014; Zussman 2002; Herber, 2015).

Public-private partnerships gave rise to the development of sectoral partnerships of various types, strongly diversified depending on the purpose of the co-operation and the actors involved. With the new public management model in place, the predominant form of partnerships were public-private partnerships (Linder, Rosenau, 2000; Osborne, Gaebler, 1992), and less often public-social partnerships implemented more as experiments rather than the practice of public governance (Baccaro, Simoni, 2004; PNR Charles-Soverall, Khan 2004). The growth of multi-sectoral partnerships took place a little later, alongside the growing popularity of governance models increasing since the mid-1990s, involving private and social partners (Sørensen, 2009, p. 237; Torfing et al. 2012).

The popularity of sectoral partnerships urban areas in Europe accelerated in the second half of the 1990s. Partnerships at the time were promoted, on the one hand, as a tool for a much more “practical” governance model in the public sphere, compared to the new public management model, and on the other hand as an excellent tool for public participation and social change, as well as an instrument for development and indication of urban policy objectives (Heinelt, Kübler, 2005; Denters, Rose, 2005), although the limitations of the concept of governance and partnerships as instruments were already recognized (Jessop 2003). One of the versions of the concept based on the interplay of various bodies was urban governance.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, further concepts concerning the city governance model were elaborated. The World Bank Report on Urban Future 21 emphasizes that a welfare-state model of governance makes urban centers costly and ineffective, especially in the face of new problems arising from rapidly growing urban development (Gale, Rothenberg, Pack, Potter 2002). The applied solutions, based on the subsidy and support of the groups in need, failed to produce the expected results. The report recommends the implementation of collaborative solutions, urban co-operation (neighborhood policy, partnerships) (Rajca 2011, pp. 354–355, Taylor 2007, Sullivan 2002) utilizing the potential of informal networks, involvement of other actors in public service delivery processes (detachment from the monopoly of power in the public sector and service delivery), including social organizations, social economy entities, and private companies (Hall, U. Pfeiffer, 2000; Jessop 2002, p. 465).

The approach based on involving a number of urban actors in the processes of public governance seemed to be the most rational and most effective form of governing a territorial unit – especially one inherently complex in terms of structure, function, extremely dynamic and dependent on both internal and external factors (Newton, Bai, 2008; Bai, McAllister, Beaty, Taylor 2010). The new approach to public governance (good governance) with its typical instruments such as networks and partnerships, has become the dominant alternative in seeking the right model for governing a city.

The EU institutions (especially the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and the Committee of the Regions), as well as European organizations such as the CEMR – Council of European Municipalities and Regions – have also contributed to the promotion of urban partnerships, taking measures to institutionalize urban policy as a separate sectoral policy of the Union since the late 1990s (Tasan-Kok, Vranken, 2011, pp. 8–17; Communication 2014; EIB, 2016; Urban Agenda, 2016; CEMR, [http](http://cemr.eu))³. The initial period of creating the foundations of urban policy resulted in a message from the European Commission and the organization of the first Urban Council in Vienna, in 1998. There was an increasingly urgent need to pay more attention to other aspects of city functioning, not only the loss of their existing functions, the problem of exclusion of certain social groups, stagnation of certain urban centers, or the issue of urban planning. The importance of life quality as an important aspect of the functioning of cities was emphasized (Atkinson 2001; Barnier, 2000; Wiktorowska-Świąćicka 2016, p. 99). Nevertheless, from the very beginning of the EU debate on the separation

³ This does not mean that urban issues have not been a matter of interest to Member States before. In 1990, the European Commission published the Green Paper on the Urban Environment (Green Paper 1990), which dubbed sectoral partnerships as an instrument to improve the urban situation and the cooperation of diverse actors as a precondition for the development and rehabilitation of degraded urban areas, addressing a number of environmental (gas emissions, acid rain), economic and social problems, and their contribution to the delivery of public services (Green Paper 1990).

of urban policy as an independent sectoral policy, the Community pointed to the importance of representatives of different urban environments participating in the transformation process, the need for them to cooperate and undertake independent bottom-up initiatives (Commission of the European Communities, 1997; Atkinson 2001, pp. 395–396).

The predecessors of today's CLLD-based partnerships were Local Support Groups, constituting the primary tool for the Urban Development Network Program – URBACT. The program is a continuation of the urban community initiatives implemented in the two editions of 1994–1999 and 2000–2006. The URBACT program is funded by the European Commission under the Territorial Cooperation objective and it assumes interregional cooperation. It is addressed to cities and aims to support development activities, including spatial and social dimensions. It is based on two principal methods, which are: integrated urban development and participatory activity planning. The integrated approach is based on the use of sustainable economic and social resources. The participatory nature of URBACT activities, meanwhile, relates to the development of strong multi-sectoral local partnerships, which are the basis for successful development strategies (URBACT 2013, p. 6). The essence of URBACT is partnership and networking, with “partnership” having two dimensions. The first is an international dimension in which cities located in different European countries work together to exchange experiences and solve similar problems through jointly developed methods and mechanisms. The second dimension of the URBACT partnership is internal (inner-city – local). It assumes the cooperation of representatives of different backgrounds in urban development, improvement of the socio-economic condition and resolution of specific problems.

The Local Support Groups, formed as part of the URBACT network, are intended to be an implementation body for the development of urban units and to realize the participatory nature of local planning processes. Their goal is to gather key urban actors and jointly develop a Local Action Plan. URBACT is important for cross-border networking and dissemination of solutions, as well as their implementation in the partner cities.

The objectives of the currently implemented third edition of URBACT – URBACT III – are complementary to the CLLD approach and focus on urban support for urban policy management, strategic development planning, implementation of sustainable development tasks, and creating a database for exchanging information and experiences in urban policy and promotion of sustainable urban development (URBACT III, [http](http://urbact.eu)). In the third edition of the URBACT program, 11 projects were launched, involving Polish cities such as Lublin, Gdansk, Wroclaw, Radlin, Koszalin, Gdynia, Poznan, Torun, Krakow, and Katowice. The implemented projects are characterized by partnership and internationality, and they focus on various problems related to the functioning of cities. They concern, among other areas, the revitalization and utilization of urban spaces, especially

neglected and poorer urban areas (2nd Chance – Lublin, Vital Cities make you active – Krakow), implementing social innovations (Boosting Social Innovation – Gdańsk), improved communication and transportation systems in cities (City Mobil Net – Gdansk, Freight Tails – Gdynia), preparation of urban stakeholders (including those working in the public sector) in terms of cooperation and joint action for the city (Change – Social Design of Public Services – Gdansk, Boosting Social Innovation), as well as improving the attractiveness of cities and their development (City Centre Doctor – Radlin, Procure – Creating Good Local Economy, Gen_Y City – Poznań, Toruń) (URBACT III, [http](http://)).

New in the third edition of the URBACT program are the Implementation Networks⁴, which are to support functional urban areas and Integrated Territorial Investments that are – next to the CLLD – a crucial development instrument for 2014–2020. Polish cities have turned out to be very active, holding membership in 5 of the 7 selected implementation networks in Europe: Lublin – CREATIVE SPIRITS (competitiveness of SMEs), Białystok – Re-Generation (environmental protection and effective use of resources), Kielce – JoTown2 (support for employment and employee mobility), Lublin – CIA7, Krakow – URB-Inclusion (combating poverty and social exclusion) (URBACT – Implementation networks, [http](http://)).

The experience of the previous URBACT program editions shows that the impact of the program on the functioning of cities is significant, although it is strongly correlated with the specificity of the city. The URBACT Monitoring Committee's evaluation study examines how the 2008–2009 economic crisis in Europe affected the URBACT cities. Analysis of the consequences has made it possible to identify areas requiring intervention in the coming years. The key areas identified were job creation and sustainable urban management, especially in the face of limited resources (URBACT 2010).

Multi-sectoral partnerships in Polish cities are still a novelty. An instrument in the form of a three-sector partnership was introduced only in the perspective of 2014–2020, together with the concept of CLLD. This does not mean, however, that no form of co-operation between partners representing different sectors existed in urban areas before. Urban partnerships created so far under various projects, such as the Project of Polish Cities Association (ZPM) – “Współpraca międzysamorządowa i międzysektorowa jako narzędzie rozwoju lokalnego i regionalnego”, the City of Gdańsk – “Gdańska Sieć Partnerstw Lokalnych” (“Gdansk Local Partnership Network”), as well as partnerships established as a result of “bottom-up” local initiatives (Borkowska, Zielińska 2014), are, for the most part, two-sector partnerships, most often public-social ones. The private sector, as in the case of rural partnerships, is sporadically involved in sectoral cooperation.

⁴ Different from URBACT, as they are a solution designed for towns that already have strategies and action plans and are currently performing them.

The legal provisions in force do not directly regulate the creation and functioning of multi-sectoral partnerships. The exceptions are regulations regarding intra-sector partnerships, created within the public sector (e.g. municipal and metropolitan unions, associations and self-governments units agreements) and specific partnerships such as public-private partnerships. The possibility of creating other types of partnership, including public-social and multi-sectoral ones, has been indirectly expressed, in principle, of a partnership that is, on the one hand, a constitutional principle and, on the other, the basis of any relationship concerning public service delivery, public task fulfilment, or external funding of projects.

The principle of partnership and sectoral cooperation appears in the normative act of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, but in the context of social dialogue rather than the building of multisectoral partnerships (Borowska 2014, p. 25). In other normative acts, there are formal grounds for dual-sector partnerships. A separate legal document has been drafted for public-private partnerships (Journal of Laws 2009, No. 19 item 100). Meanwhile, the legal basis for public-social partnerships should be derived from the Act on Public Benefit and Voluntary Activities (Journal of Laws 2003, No. 96, item 873), but also other detailed acts, including the Act on Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions, Act on Social Assistance, Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence, Act on Education in Sobriety and Anti-alcoholism, and Act on Public Procurement. Although they do not specify what public-social partnerships are exactly, they point to principles of cooperation between public sector representatives and social and private actors (partners) in the execution of public tasks. The formal basis for establishing partnerships was also introduced by the Act of 6 December 2006 on the Principles of Development Policy. However, the partnerships mentioned therein are typically instrumental and are created for the purposes of implementation of the partnership projects (Journal of Laws 2006 No. 227 item 1658).

The short period of functioning of urban partnerships in Poland, their differentiation and multiplicity make it difficult to carry out extensive research on them. As a consequence, separate studies are being carried out concerning public-private partnerships (e.g., Hasuner 2013, Korbus, Strawiński 2009, Kopańska, Bartczak, Siwińska-Gorzelak 2008, Żegleń 2014, Cenker 2011, Herbst 2014) and public-social partnerships – understood as a form of cooperation between the social and public sectors (e.g., Rymsza, Frączak, Skrzypiec, Wejzman 2007, Dudkiewicz, Makowski 2011) existing in Poland. Apart from these types of partnerships, there are also partnerships that are purpose- or task-specific, e.g., for the labor market or the development of social economy. Some of them were founded in the 1990s under the pre-accession program PHARE (partnership for employment), the Polish-American Local Partnership Program (Partnership, [http](http://)), or the initiative EQUAL (Grucza et al. 2007).

J.J. Wygnański emphasizes that a number of partnerships that have been created in Poland, were short-lived. Most often, they were founded as a “side effect” of other activities, and “for a special purpose” e.g. to apply for external (financial) support. In these cases, the idea of a partnership was to meet the formal requirements laid down, for example, in the documentation of a specific contest. Over the years, the problem of “forced” partnerships, i.e. those arising from the need to meet the formal requirements of a given contest, is still present. These often fictitious partnerships are really about subcontracting rather than real cooperation (Wygnański 2012, pp. 10–11; Badanie 2014, p. 65). The instrumental approach to the concept of partnership does not only distort the essence of that design, but it also instils the fictitious cooperation structures in the public consciousness. The appearance of some partnerships was also observed within LEADER-based partnerships (Navarro, Woods, Cejudo, 2015, p. 283; Furmankiewicz, Thompson, Zielinska 2010, p. 60).

4.2.2. Examples of urban partnerships in Poland

Urban partnerships are still a novelty in Poland. The existing partnership structures are strongly differentiated in terms of size, purpose, specificity, and their subjective and territorial extent. Partnerships operating in cities are also problematic to study due to the aforementioned diversity and the fact that many of them are non-formal. It is therefore difficult to verify, unequivocally, to what extent cooperative structures can be classified as actual sectoral partnerships, and to what extent as informal, non-formalized networks of urban stakeholders. The existence of partnerships is largely declarative and depends on self-identification of the actors involved. Although formalization is not a factor conditioning the functioning of a partnership, some of the cooperating entities have still decided to adopt a specific legal form, which confers on them a legal personality (Herbst, Olechowski, Starzyk 2015, p. 36). Formalization of cooperation demonstrates the maturity of the partnership as well as its sustainability and plans for taking specific actions that could not be pursued without legal form (and legal personality).

As indicated by the authors of the report “Badanie Współpracy Między-samorządowej i Międzysektorowej w Polsce. Raport z badania dla Związku Miast Polskich” [“Intergovernmental and Cross-sectoral Cooperation in Poland. Report from the survey for the Polish Cities Association”] (Herbst, Olechowski, Starzyk 2015), when it comes to towns, the term “partnership” is extremely broad, covering both “large urban networks” involving multiple actors, and “local partnerships” that are much smaller (Herbst, Olechowski, Starzyk 2015, p. 39). External resources have contributed to the formalization of urban partnerships, since they allow them to carry out their undertakings in co-operation, while “enforcing” the adoption of a particular form. One such project was by the Polish Cities

Association (ZPM), “Budowanie kompetencji do współpracy między samorządowej i międzysektorowej jako narzędzia rozwoju lokalnego i regionalnego” (“Building competence for inter-governmental and cross-sectoral cooperation as a tool for local and regional development”), co-financed by the Regional Development Program of the Ministry of Development from the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism (ZMP, <http>). The project, implemented in two phases, involved the selection of inter-governmental and cross-sectoral partnerships (38 in total), which received support in developing the necessary skills. Furthermore, regular monitoring of the functioning of partnerships was conducted, as well as spreading the knowledge and experience of the partners participating in the project (Potkański, Wiktorczyk-Nadolna 2016, p. 4).

The research conducted by Herbst, Olechowski, and Starzyk on partnerships formed under the ZMP project shows that it is necessary to redefine cross-sectoral co-operation and to adopt regulations allowing cooperation within the partnership. The lack of such regulation is a reason for the negative attitude of local governments toward this form of task execution. This is due to the “overregulation” of the public sector and the necessary justification for local governments, which would like to take action under partnership. Measures to institutionalize partnerships are also necessary, which would provide them greater independence and competence (Herbst, Olechowski, Starzyk 2015, pp. 106–107).

The second of the analysed projects was the Gdansk Local Partnership Network, financed from the European Social Fund (under Resolution 7.2 of the Human Capital Operational Programme 2007–2013 (Resolution No. XXX-VI/1061/09). The project was supposed to respond to the problem of the disintegration of particular parts of the city (districts), the lack of communication and cooperation within the city, and the low level of social development. The result was the setting up of coordinating district structures and, in the districts themselves, creating local partnerships aimed at activating the residents (neighbourhood houses as social centers), as well as seeking opportunities for the development of individuals based on their resources (Siuda 2010, <http>). The created network became a platform for the supra-local cooperation between the self-government of Gdańsk and eleven non-governmental organizations working for the local communities, which – under the next CEAL project (a new perspective on the social economy from the standpoint of the British experience based on the UK’s community centers) – worked out together a neighborhood housing model, implemented in the districts of Gdansk. The model was supposed to provide an inclusive and activating place for the local community, but also create conditions conducive to the development of the immediate environment using the available resources (Model 2011).

The initiative for creating urban partnerships, such as the Gdansk Local Partnership Network, has proven to be sustainable, and neighboring houses have become an element of Gdansk’s districts. It is important to note that the

idea of creating partnerships was not limited to merely setting up structures in individual districts, but was linked to the identification of local leaders, the education of local activists regarding public participation, the use of proven solutions (the British experience), and the involvement of city authorities (Boczoń, pp. 10–12).

Among the problems repeatedly signaled as limiting cross-sectoral cooperation, also in the case of rural partnerships, there is: distrust, no collaborative experience, a lack of cooperation standards, formalization, and red tape. These issues cause the public sector to be concerned about the expansion of partnerships in the social and private dimension. Then, there is also a lack of experience in participation, local community involvement in the decision making processes, as well as the decision-making processes, as well as of experience and the evaluation of action efficiency (Kaczmarek, Herbst 2016, pp. 100–101). Apart from that, urban partnerships lack representation in the private sector. The principal factor that determines the participation of entrepreneurs in the partnership structure is the benefit they can obtain from that fact. The logic and motives of the private sector are thus contrary to those by which the public and social sectors are driven. An important barrier to the participation of entrepreneurs in partnerships is the lack of clarity as to what the partnership is. The shortage of accepted definition at the very outset raises the problem of different expectations and ideas about its objectives and operation (Borowska 2014, p. 176). Another barrier is the lack of visible and measurable effects of partnership activity. In the case of the public and social sectors, the effects come about in a distant future. Some of them are also accountable and measurable with quantitative indicators (Borowska 2014, p. 177).

In conclusion, what distinguishes urban partnership from LAGs operating in rural areas is the way of making decisions. While rural partnerships mimicked the public sector's decision-making methods (as a result of their domination by the local administration), 70% of urban partnerships under the ZMP project used consensus as a form of decision-making (Potkański, Porawski 2016; p. 82). That being said, in the case of these partnerships, the leaders and organizers were mostly local governments, where structural constraints (in the form of available financial resources) would affect their attitude, and, as pointed out by J. Kaczmarek and J. Herbst, cause a shift of "paradigm from a competitive to a cooperating and partnered one (Kaczmarek Herbst 2016, pp. 100–101). Regarding urban partnerships, studied within the framework of the project implemented by the ZMP, doubts were raised about the specificity of the relations of the involved entities. Similar to LEADER partnerships in rural areas, there was a tendency of dominance by the strongest body, namely the public sector. Also questionable was the partner model of managing such cooperative structures, which evolved toward hierarchical management and the desire to subordinate the other participants (Kaczmarek, Herbst 2016, p. 108).

4.3. Functioning of multisector partnerships in rural and urban areas – similarities and differences

The experience of partnerships created both in Poland and in other EU countries under the LEADER approach and selected multisector partnerships created in Polish cities allows one to identify some regularities in the structures of existing partnerships. Such observations can be useful in the context of the implementing urban partnerships (urban Local Action Groups) within the CLLD approach.

While LEADER is characterized by a clear territorial dimension, in the case of less developed and investigated urban partnerships, the problematic dimension (problem-oriented partnerships) should be pointed out. The territorial dimension of the existing urban partnerships so far has been more often determined by the extent of the problem and the number of residents (community members) of particular settlements or districts involved in solving local problems. Hence, existing urban partnerships (compared to rural ones) are much more diverse in terms of goals, actors, relationships, and leadership patterns, and structures (most often non-formal partnerships).

On the basis of the analysis, the following characteristics of rural and urban partnerships can be identified:

a) the dominance of public sector representatives in the partnership structure, which is in contradiction to the basic principle of this form of cooperation – the principle of partnership, assuming equality between involved parties;

b) formalization, overregulation, and limitation of the possibility of partnership activity, wherein the absence of specific rules for creating such structures and a precise indication of the scope of their competence are observed;

c) the apparently participatory character of multi-sector partnerships involving a wide range of representatives of the three sectors and the wide participation of the local community;

d) the clear task orientation of created partnerships; usually they are created under programs supported by external sources (e.g. EU) which determine their purposes of action. As a result, many of the partnerships created thus far are financially-driven and follow project requirements.

The first of the identified similarities, and at the same time, a common feature found in both rural partnerships created and developed within LEADER and other urban partnerships, is the unequal position of the involved partners. In the structure of rural and urban partnerships, the domination of public sector representatives is clearly observable (PSDB 2012, p. 20). The mentioned domination of the public sector in the structure of partnerships is generally evaluated negatively due to the imposition of a public sector perspective and its traditional form of decision making. Furthermore there is a risk that partnerships controlled by the public sector will become yet another instrument of public governance at the disposal of public

authorities (Lisowska 2014), not an actual cooperative structure based on the potential of the involved actors (Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014, pp. 77–90; Furmankiewicz, 2010; Furmankiewicz, Knieć Atterton 2015, pp. 137–138). Simultaneously, the reality of Polish local communities should be taken into consideration. In many cases, local governments have been the “driving” force of the local community, the main stimulant in the process of creating partnerships, and as a result have become their natural leader. Such a trend was noticeable not only in Poland, but also in other parts of Europe, e.g. in Northern Ireland (Kołomycew 2013, pp. 304–323; Pawłowska, Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew, 2014, pp. 162–163; Scott 2003, p. 285). The dominance of the public sector in many cases results from the weakness of other sectors (both substantive and organizational) as well as the low level of commitment to public issues observed among their representatives. Actually, the public sector was knowledgeable, experienced in implementing EU projects and familiar with bureaucracy. In addition local administration developed an extensive network of contacts within the local community.

In the case of urban partnerships, the lack of substantive and organizational preparation for building partnership structures among representatives of the non-public sector was less meaningful due to much more professionalized and more developed third sector organizations. The problems associated with the weak involvement of private sector representatives in the creation of cross-sector partnerships were similar in both rural and urban areas. This trend is due to the fundamental goal of the private sector, which is profit maximization and business development. Their participation in the cross-sector partnership was dependent on the potential profit and expected investment that must pay off (Borkowska 2014, pp. 174–187). In the case of rural partnerships, the business sector was not as interested in LEADER as was expected due to many reasons including the availability of other supporting programs addressed to private sector entities, and other axes of the rural development program, much more profitable for entrepreneurs. In practice, LEADER became beneficial for small private business usually related to the tourism sector (Zajda 2014; Pałka 2014).

Another problem observed in the case of partnerships existing in Poland was excessive formalization of the cooperation of local stakeholders (Gąsior-Niemiec, Kołomycew 2014). This is a consequence *inter alia* of a low level of social trust, which induces difficulties in cross-sector cooperation (CBOS 2016; Brol 2013, pp. 59–63), but also the domination of the public sector (over other sectors) even at the local level. Domination of the public sector not only limits the possibilities for cooperation between different sector representatives, but also restricts and sometimes even erodes the participation of local communities (Bober et. al. 2013, pp. 34, 78). In addition, there is still present a (self-)belief in the “infallibility” of the public sector, which discourages cross-sectoral cooperation. Another problem of the public sector is basically little experience in cooperating with other, non-public entities (Kluczyńska, Guć, Gosk, Sienicka 2009, p. 5). The bureaucracy

of the LEADER program also contributed to difficulties in the process of creating cross-sectoral partnerships, and in fact made the representatives of non-public sectors much more dependent on public authorities (PBSD 2012, p. 68). The desire to participate in a highly formalized program (LEADER), for many rural organizations was associated with structural changes as well as a shift in previous practices and activities. In many cases local organizations were forced to formalize their status (usually they operated as informal groups without a legal personality) and professionalize their activities, which completely changed their specificity and even led to the loss of their primary goals. For many rural organizations and their members, participation in the highly formalized program proved impossible. Not being able to meet LEADER's requirements, some of them even stopped their activities and drew back from community life or just stayed on the shelf (remaining inactive) (Kołomycew, 2014, pp. 63–84).

While in the case of partnerships created under LEADER excessive formalization was indicated as a significant problem at the stage of creating partnerships as well as their further functioning (for example, the establishment of a partnership required acceptance of a specific legal form), in the case of urban partnerships, the lack of regulation of partnership's forms of cooperation proved to be a problem signaled by the involved stakeholders (Borkowska 2014, p. 176). However, it is not so much about regulations and the necessity of formalization: the key element seems to be clarifying the scope of a partnership's activities including their participation in realizing public tasks (e.g. the possibility of commitment to those tasks by the public authorities).

Both rural and urban partnerships have only partially met their expectations for broad involvement and strengthening of participation at local level. The formula of multi-sector partnerships, assuming the involvement of different sector representatives as well as diverse social groups into common activities, has proved to be too difficult in many cases, in terms of formal and organizational dimension. The involvement of local communities in LEADER partnerships observed at the initial stage (Pawłowska, Kołomycew, Gąsior-Niemiec 2014), was largely due to the novelty of a such formula and local community interest in the new opportunity to implement local actions. The already mentioned formalization, complicated application procedures (too difficult for people unexperienced in implementing EU projects as well as not being familiar with modes of public sector activity) and refunding of project costs not pre-financing system (returned after project completion) effectively weakened the initial enthusiasm of local organizations and local community members. Simultaneously, LEADER's requirements for creating partnerships have exposed the weakness of the Polish social sector, which apparently was not prepared to participate in such an advanced program. Generally tiny, inefficient rural organizations, with no financial support or organizational skills, mainly based on volunteers and not a paid staff were unable to cope with a challenge like the LEADER program (PSDB 2012, p. 33). For many weak and financially

inefficient rural organizations, the local authorities became really supportive. On one hand, they helped local social actors overcome difficulties concerning their involvement in the LEADER program, but on the other, made them dependent on their decisions and forced into public sector-like functioning within the partnership structure (including an accepted manner of decision-making typical of the public sector and far from modes based on consensus or consultation).

Partnerships created under the LEADER program theoretically had a participative character. However, in practice, they did not involve as many people as it might have seemed. A similar tendency was observed in the case of urban partnerships. They also included mainly active members of local communities, or those who were interested in public activities and had the necessary resources (including free time, organizational and management skills, as well as a certain level of knowledge of public sector functioning) which allowed them to become involved in the highly formalized sectoral partnership structure (Zielińska 2014, p. 52). However, in the case of urban partnerships, it needs to be stressed that their creation and further functioning were far more professional, and rarely initiated or controlled by local authorities. This resulted primarily from the fact that many of them have been created “bottom-up” as an effect of local needs and community members’ cooperation, not as an outcome of programs co-financed by EU funds or other external funds. LEADER’s systemic approach, in spite of the idea of “bottom-up”, in practice imposed a rigid frame under which partnerships could work. Paradoxically, the unspecified nature of urban partnership provided much more freedom for urban communities and their activities (Filip, 2014, pp. 66–85; Lewenstein 2014, pp. 85–105).

In conclusion, financial support for sectoral partnerships is still nowadays an important motivating factor for establishing such partnerships (Potkański, Porawski, 2016, pp. 77–94). The financial incentives can encourage representatives of different sectors to start cooperation and a formalized partnership structure. But it is difficult to conclusively state how financially-driver cooperating structures will be able to set and developed internal relations, forms of decision making, and common action based on the principle of partnership and equality. This problem seems to be particularly relevant for the creation of CLLD partnerships.

CONCLUSION

At the end of 2013, a certain chapter in rural development connected with the implementation of the LEADER approach was symbolically closed, provoking summarizing it and pointing to potential barriers to the implementation of a new instrument based on its experiences, i.e., Community-Led Local Development.

There have been many analysis and extensive source literature concerning the LEADER approach, especially in Poland, where 91% of the surface area is rural. Over the years since Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, the image of the approach itself has changed. When the Pilot Programme of LEADER+ was started, few local actors or social leaders were familiar with its specificity and principles – so different from their previous forms of activities. Their practice involved an attitude in which the development of rural and urban-rural municipalities was predominantly (locally) connected with, and perhaps even dependent on, the activity of one entity: the local office, and institutions related to it, such as local social welfare centers. The new perspective of forming local action groups meant the creation of a new legal entity, which took the form of an association or foundation (less often, a union of associations), and which, unlike other non-governmental organizations, was able to obtain considerable (for Polish rural areas) financial resources. Thus, it was possible to form a new, lasting organization operating for rural development. That “God's gift” was an important motivation for local officials taking up activity aimed at forming it.

A multi-sector partnership in the LAG formula was different from what had been typical of the rural non-governmental sector in Poland. For example, its composition was unusual: representatives of the public, social, and economic sectors had to be members of the partnership, and there were protective mechanisms to prevent the domination of one of the sectors. The problem, however, was the low level of interest by economic sector representatives in participating in the organization. In practice, few entrepreneurs operated in rural areas, and most of them had small self-employment or family businesses. This structure of the economic sector caused that entrepreneurs' interest in implementing the LEADER approach was limited to using financial support for small enterprise development. Hence, the intention to form local action groups from the beginning involved the leaders of the activity accepting various dimensions of superficial activities and some fictitious or apparent actions as part of the program. That organization,

unlike other rural NGOs, also had a permanent source of financing, and local actors were to decide how to utilize the resources. New funds aroused hope for investment, particularly social ones, which had always been marginalized in favor of the priorities of infrastructure solutions in rural areas. Since the resources available within the LEADER program could not be used to build roads, water systems or lighting, it became evident that this time it was possible to subsidize the social activity of e.g. village women's association, voluntary fire brigades, to buy costumes for local folk singers or brass bands, to renovate public facilities such as rural community integration centers, or subsidize elements of tourist and para-tourist infrastructure in rural areas, e.g., cycling, hiking, or educational trails, and modernize and improve existing monuments, being an important element of local culture and rural heritage. For many members and partners of local action groups, LEADER became a synonym for the development of local tourism, promoting various resources, but also a substantial bureaucratic burden with a high degree of professionalism for activities. The threat of failure to clear the expenditure and the refusal to refund it meant that local officials or representatives of local authorities managed the new organizations informally, determining priorities in spending resources in those communes located within the areas supported by local action groups. There were some problems with the actual implementation of the partnership principle. On the surface, everything was in accord with the procedures for implementing the approach in Poland: group composition met the assumptions, and the fact that a local official was also regarded as a representative of a sports team or a folk ensemble was not surprising for anyone. As underscored in this publication, participation may have many aspects. It may be the end, but it may also be identified with a means for pursuing other ends. We should not expect that in a country such as Poland, with its history, its social training of activity typical of *homo sovieticus*, and low social capital potential, it will be easy to implement the principles of the LEADER approach, including the partnership principle. This process is long, lasting not years but decades, and its success depends on ensuring legal and organizational conditions for grassroots initiatives and is connected with education promoting civic activity.

The change in attitudes of local leaders towards building lasting partner relationships between the representatives of the three sectors was supposed to occur as a result of training sessions, workshops, and study visits possible from scheme I of Pilot Programme LEADER+, which made it possible to learn about specific examples of local action groups from Italy, Germany, or France. But this change of attitudes was prevented by formal procedures, (including the re-financing principle), which made local action groups dependent on the "good will" of local officials, often acting as guarantors of loans contracted by local action groups, which were new non-governmental organizations with no credit rating.

Many undertaken activities became typical of the organizations, based on the principle that “here everything must be OK”. The adopted indicators of project performance – often entered automatically, without deeper reflection or analysis of local resources and real capabilities – always had to be met and projects had to be completed positively, otherwise they would not have been re-financed. There was little room for risk, social experiments, or trying new solutions. The innovativeness of local action groups was limited. Hence, they became identified with new activities which had not been applied locally before. Sometimes this led to absurd situations, e.g., when the building of a playground was regarded as innovative. Therefore, the partnerships did not create conditions for social innovations, which implementation always bears some risk and begins with critical analysis of the current situation. Innovations were sometimes implemented, but they had the form of a local action group which was expected to redefine the existing relationships between the representatives of the three sectors, be an alternative form (other than solutions occurring in Polish rural areas earlier), not of mutual provision of information but of collaboration of representatives of different entities, organizations, and institutions or even individual activists and opinion leaders. Polish local action groups were the first form of formal cross-sectoral collaboration based on the partnership principle that was implemented on such a great scale. Actually, it was hard to achieve the assumed partnership, but the idea was the objective to aim for.

Since 2014, local action groups have been implementing a new instrument, Community-Led Local Development. In Polish urban areas this form of partnership has not been very popular so far, although such organizations have already been established in some towns. The transformed LEADER (as a social innovation) is undergoing diffusion as one of the few examples of solutions popularized in rural but transferred to urban areas. Urban areas with their specificity cause new challenges to local action groups. The present and future of Community-Led Local Development means rural and urban local action groups meeting multiple problems, some of which are similar: deficits of social capital, the lack of tradition of collaboration between different social actors, and different apparent actions typical of the tradition of *homo sovieticus*.

The experiences of LAGs in rural areas may become a model for developing similar partnership structures in urban areas, though the specificity of those entities is certainly different. Different problems (and their scale), as well as the specificity of local stakeholders, are bound to have a strong influence on the final form of urban partnerships and their functions. We also need to remember the experiences of some Polish cities (e.g., Warsaw, Gdańsk, and partnerships established as part of the Association of Polish Cities (ZMP). “Building competence for collaboration between local authorities and between sectors as the tools of local and regional development” – performed as part of the Regional Programme co-financed by MF EOG 2009–2014 – acquired as part of the initiative and the programmes

URBAN and URBACT, as well as smaller projects, aimed to establish a partnership based on engagement and cooperation among varied entities. It is the specificity of the actors engaged in the formation of urban partnerships that will largely determine their form, the scope of activity, as well as the specificity of internal relationships and the roles of the entities in the structure of urban local action groups.

The complexity of problems in towns, their variety, and The diversity and complexity of public policies implemented in urban areas carried out, make multi-sectoral partnerships an instrument of urban governance, which follows the general trend of governance with extensive participation by non-public entities, has been popular for several years now. Social sector entities play a significant role in currently existing urban partnerships. In comparison to rural organizations, they are more often professionalized, and thus better prepared from the substantive and organizational point of view to collaborate with the public and economic sectors, and more effective in applying for external funds. Organizational weakness, the extensive participation of volunteers, and the lack of financial resources, as well as limited access to knowledge resources, have been the main restraint of activity and the formation of partnership structures in the case of social entities occurring in rural areas. The urban social sector is much more rarely the beneficiary of public entities. Whereas the previous experiences of urban partnerships lead to the conclusion that the social sector will be an active element in partnerships established within the CLLD approach, the engagement of the economic sector arouses some doubts. In this respect, the experiences of Polish urban and rural areas are similar. What is more, the negligible engagement of actors representing business is not only a Polish characteristic. This can be explained by the obvious goal of the economic sector, which is simply to obtain profit, and the pursuit of benefits from engaging in certain relationships based on collaboration. The lack of concrete financial benefits for the participation of the economic sector in urban partnerships may be the factor that discourages entrepreneurs from engaging in the formation of the functioning of the organizations.

Community-Led Local Development, currently being implemented as part of the three main developmental policies of the European Union (e.g., regional, agricultural, and fishing policy) and dedicated to all types of areas (i.e., urban, rural, and those dependent on commercial fishing), through its main principles of implementation allows coordination and better adjustment of developmental activities to the real needs of local communities. Furthermore, this instrument is designed to ensure conditions conducive to the inclusion of social and economic partners in the governance of local development policy and participation in decision-making concerning its form. However, Community-Led Local Development in itself should not be treated as a solution to all the problems revealed by the development policy. The effectiveness of local development policy implemented through the discussed instrument (in particular, whether local communities are really empowered and take part in the governance) does not depend on its assumptions but first

of all on the real activities of national and regional authorities and local communities themselves, especially the inclination to cooperate and collaborate for the common good.

It seems that for Community-Led Local Development to be successful and have lasting effects, it is necessary to change the practical attitude to that instrument of territorial development, i.e., go beyond perceiving it merely as another source of financing investment projects. Community-Led Local Development should be treated as an instrument of change (mainly a qualitative one), where subsidizing various infrastructure and social projects is not the objective, but one element of a broader process that also includes structural transformation, stimulating local activity and entrepreneurship, and the formation and enhancement of social capital. It is a method of performing developmental activities, not only an element (obligatory or optional) of operating programmes co-financed with EU resources. Moreover, to achieve better effects locally, activities taken as part of it should be more integrated with complementary developmental policies, especially the process of reactivating or regenerating rural areas.

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ANNEX

List of the strategies of development of local action groups used in the research

1. Local Development Strategy of Biała Podlaska Local Action Group, no date or place of publication
2. Local Development Strategy of the Area of “Dolina Giełczwi” Local Action Group, no date or place of publication
3. Local Development Strategy of “Doliną Wieprza i Leśnym szlakiem” 2009, no date or place of publication
4. Local Development Strategy of the Area of “G 6 Grzędy Sokalskiej” (2007–2013 programming period), 2014, no date or place of publication
5. Local Development Strategy for the years 2009–2015 of Hrubieszów Association “Lepsze Jutro” Local Action Group, 2009, Lublin–Hrubieszów
6. Local Development Strategy for the Area of “Kraina wokół Lublina” Local Action Group, 2009, no date or place of publication
7. Local Development Strategy of “Krasnystaw PLUS” Local Action Group, Appendix to Resolution No. II/3/2015 of the General Meeting of “Krasnystaw PLUS” Local Action Group Association of 8th April 2015
8. Local Development Strategy for the years 2009–2015, “Zapiecek” Local Action Group, Radzyń Podlaski 2009
9. Local Development Strategy for the years 2009–2015, “Owocowy Szlak” Local Action Group 2009, no date or place of publication
10. Local Development Strategy for the years 2009–2015 for “Promenada S12” Local Action Group, 2009, Rejowiec Fabryczny
11. Local Development Strategy for the years 2009–2015, “Ziemia Biłgorajska” Local Action Group 2009, Biłgoraj
12. Local Development Strategy for the area of “Lepsza Przyszłość Ziemi Ryckiej” Local Action Group, 2009, Ryki
13. Local Development Strategy 2009–2015, “Leśny Krąg” Local Action Group, Appendix no. 2 to the Resolution of the General Meeting of LDS No. 6/2/2013 of 9th October 2013
14. Local Development Strategy for the Area of “Polesie” Local Action Group, 2008, Lublin

15. Local Development Strategy for the years 2009–2015, “Razem ku Lepszej Przyszłości” Local Action Group 2009, Łuków
16. Local Development Strategy for the Area of “Ziemia Zamojska” Local Action Group, 2015, Sitno
17. Local Development Strategy of “Roztocze Tomaszowskie” Local Action Group Association, Lublin, Tomaszów Lubelski 2014

The list of strategic documents of local action groups for the years 2014–2020 used in the research

1. Community-Led Local Development Strategy (LDS) for the RDP 2014–2020 programming period. “Poleska Dolina Bugu” Local Action Group, June 2016, no place of publication
2. Local Development Strategy for the Area of “Kraina wokół Lublina” Local Action Group aimed at the development of communes of the Lublin Powiat for the 2014–2020 budget period. Appendix to Resolution no. XXII/65/15 of the General Meeting of “Kraina wokół Lublina” LAG Association of 18.12.2015, with amendments adopted by resolution of the General Meeting of the Association no. XXIII/67/2016 of May 20, 2016, no place of publication.
3. Community-Led Local Development Strategy for “Zapiecek” Local Action Group for the 2014–2020 budget period. Appendix no. 1 to Resolution no. III/8/12/2015 of the General Meeting of 18.12.2015, Radzyń Podlaski.
4. Local Development Strategy for the years 2016–2022 for the area of “PROMENADA S12” Local Action Group. Appendix to Resolution no. 3/2016 of the General Meeting of “PROMENADA S 12” Local Action Group Association of June 7, 2016, Rejowiec Fabryczny.
5. Community-Led Local Development Strategy for the 2014–2020 RDP programming period of Local Action Group for Ziemia Kraśnicka, December 2015, no place of publication.
6. Community-Led Local Development Strategy of Biała Podlaska Local Action Group, 2014–2020. Appendix no. 1 to Resolution no. 2/W/2016 of 16.06.2016, no place of publication
7. Local Development Strategy of “Doliną Wieprza i Leśnym Szlakiem” Local Action Group Association for the years 2016–2022. Appendix no. 1 to Resolution 6/2016 of the General Meeting of “Doliną Wieprza i Leśnym Szlakiem” LAG of 16.06.2016. No place of publication.
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12. Community-Led Local Development Strategy for the years 2016–2023 for the area of “Nasze Roztocze” Local Action Group, Zamość 2016.
13. Community-Led Local Development Strategy for the years 2016–2022 for the area of “Owocowy Szlak” Local Action Group, Opole Lubelskie 2015.
14. Local Development Strategy of “Polesie” Local Action Group for the years 2016–2023. No date or place of publication.
15. Local Development Strategy for the years 2016–2023 of “Razem ku Lepszej Przyszłości” Local Action Group. Appendix to Resolution no. XVI/57/2015 of the General Meeting of “Razem ku lepszej przyszłości” Local Action Group of December 29, 2015 concerning the adoption of Local Development Strategy for the years 2016-2023 by “Razem ku lepszej przyszłości” Local Action Group. No place of publication.
16. Local Development Strategy for the years 2016–2023 of “Zielony Pierścień” Local Action Group, December 2015.
17. Local Development Strategy for the years 2016–2023 of “Ziemia Biłgorajska” Local Action Group. Appendix no. 1 to Resolution no. XVII/17/2015 of the General Meeting of “Ziemia Biłgorajska” Local Action Group. of December 21, 2015. No place of publication.
18. Community-Led Local Development Strategy for the area of “Ziemia Zamojska” Local Action Group for the years 2014–2020, Sitno 2015.
19. Local Development Strategy of “Ziemi Chełmskiej” Local Action Group Association for the 2014-2020 programming period, Chełm 2015.
20. Community-Led Local Development Strategy for the years 2016–2022 for the area of Mielgiew, Milejów, Piaski, Rybczewice and Trawniki communes. Piaski 2016.
21. Local Development Strategy of “Roztocze Tomaszowskie” Local Action Group Association. Lublin-Tomaszów Lubelski 2014.
22. Community-Led Local Development Strategy for “Jagiellońska Przystań” Local Action Group for the years 2016–2022. Appendix to Resolution No. 5/06/2016 of the General Meeting of “Jagiellońska Przystań” Local Action Group Association of June 14, 2016, no place of publication.

Questionnaire of interview with local action groups

Dear Sir or Madam,

The University of Łódź is carrying out sociological research concerning the activity of local action groups aimed at solving local social problems. We kindly ask you to take part in our research. We want to assure you that all the provided information will be used in the collective form and only for scientific purposes.

Activity of LAGs in solving social problems

Local action groups are implementing many projects devoted to solving social problems. I would like to talk about which of them you consider to be the most important.

1. Please describe this project briefly, including the following issues:
 - 1.1. The problem it was expected to solve or minimize. What was the problem?
.....
.....
.....
 - 1.2. The target group of support: who were the assumed beneficiaries of the project?
.....
.....
.....
 - 1.3. Activities taken as part of the project in order to minimize the problem.
What activities were taken?
.....
.....
.....
.....
2. Has the LAG carried out any other activities/projects before in order to minimize the same social problem?
 1. yes
 2. no
3. Has the LAG carried out any other activities/projects before addressed at the same target group?
 1. yes
 2. no

4. Has the LAG carried out any other activities/projects before using the same activities or tasks?

1. yes
2. no

5. What was the source of financing for the project?

.....

6. Is/was the information on the project available online?

1. yes
2. no

7. Is/was the LAG carrying out the project individually or in cooperation with other organizations/institutions?

1. individually – *go on to question no. 15*
2. in cooperation with other organizations/institutions.

8. What organizations/institutions?

Name of organization/institution	yes	no
8.1. non-governmental organizations other than LAGs		
8.2. local communal authorities (rural commune head, council)		
8.3. entities subject to local administration, such as communal culture centers or public schools		
8.4. communal social welfare centers		
8.5. other LAGs		
8.6. social cooperatives		
8.7. entrepreneurs		
8.8. other (what?)		

9. Has the LAG collaborated before with?

Use the name provided in response to question 8. If the respondent has mentioned more than one organization/institution, ask about each of them.

Organization no. 1 1. yes 2. no 3. don't know

Organization no. 2 1. yes 2. no 3. don't know

10. Does the LAG intend to collaborate with this organization(s)/institution(s) after the completion of the project?

If the respondent has mentioned more than one organization/institution, ask about each of them.

Organization no. 1 1. yes 2. no 3. hard to say

Organization no. 2 1. yes 2. no 3. hard to say

11. What is/was the form of this collaboration? Is/was it formal collaboration based on a contract, letter of intent or another agreement or informal collaboration not based on any official document?
 Organization no. 1 1. formal cooperation, 2. informal cooperation
 Organization no. 2 1. formal cooperation, 2. informal cooperation
12. Who is/was the leader of the project?

13. What took part in planning the project?
 1. The project was planned by the leader only, without consulting with other entities.
 2. The project was planned by the leader after consultation with other entities.
 3. The project was planned together by the leader and other entities.
14. Were/are all the partners equally active in the performance of the project after it was planned?
 1. The project is/was carried out by the leader only, the other entities are/were not really taking part in its implementation.
 2. The project is/was carried out mostly by the leader; the other entities are/were taking part in its implementation but only to a small degree.
 3. The project is/was carried out by all the entities equally.
 4. The project is/was carried out mostly by the other entities; the leader is/was taking part in this stage to a little degree.
15. Is/was the project only addressed at the community supported by the LAG?
 1. yes
 2. no
16. What attitude to the implementation of the project did the supported persons have?
 1. It wasn't necessary to persuade the persons to take part in the project.
 2. It was necessary to persuade the persons to take part in the project, but it wasn't hard.
 3. It was very hard to persuade the persons to take part in the project.
17. Has the problem addressed by the project been solved?
 1. It has been solved – *go on to question no. 19*
 2. It has been significantly reduced – *go on to question no. 19*
 3. It has been somewhat reduced – *go on to question no. 19*
 4. It has been only a little reduced.
 5. It has not even been reduced.

18. Why was it impossible to reduce the problem or why was it only a little reduced?

.....
.....
.....

19. Do you think the beneficiaries of the support have become more autonomous in solving their problems as a result of carrying out this project?

- 1. yes
- 2. no

20. Has the LAG collaborated before with any of the following organizations/institutions in performing <u>other activities or projects</u> devoted to solving <u>social problems</u> ?	Yes, once	Yes, many times	No
20.1. non-governmental organizations other than LAGs			
20.2. local communal authorities (rural commune head, council)			
20.3. entities subject to local administration, such as communal culture centers or public schools			
20.4. communal social welfare centers			
20.5. other LAGs			
20.6. social cooperatives			
20.7. entrepreneurs			
20.8. other (what?)			

Thank you very much for your time and the information provided.