Eastern Poland and the Challenge of Governance
Part II
Limitations of the Partnership- and Network-based Approach to Policies of Local Development

Nowe modele rządzenia – wyzwania dla Polski Wschodniej część II
Ograniczenia sieciowych i partnerskich podejść do zarządzania rozwojem lokalnym

Anna Gąsior-Niemiec, Anna Kołomycew, Agnieszka Pawłowska
Department of Political Science University of Rzeszów

Streszczenie
Opracowanie przedstawia teoretyczne i empiryczne aspekty nowych metod zarządzania, wdrożone w Polsce Wschodniej i które zostały zilustrowane przez Lokalne Grupy Działania w województwie podkarpackim. Autorzy opracowania poddali analizie mocne i słabe strony Lokalnych Grup Działania, jak również rozwiązania instytucjonalne dotyczące polityki wdrażania innowacyjności w Polsce po akcesji Polski do Unii Europejskiej. Szczególny nacisk został położony na główne czynniki, mające wpływ na pozytywne wdrożenie rozwiązań instytucjonalnych i polityki w oparciu o sieci i partnerstwa. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań autorzy prezentują modele polityki kulturalnej, ogólny poziom zaufania i zbiorowego przywództwa, które są głównymi czynnikami efektywnego zarządzania na płaszczyźnie sieci – partnerstwa (w oparciu o model rządzenia w Polsce Wschodniej).

Summary
The paper presents theoretical and empirical aspects of new modes of governance (NMG) as applied in Eastern Poland, which are exemplified by Local Action Groups (LAGs) in the Podkarpackie Voivodship. The authors discuss strengths and weaknesses of the NMG as an institutional and policy innovation imported to Poland following its accession to the EU. In particular, they focus on major domestic factors determining successful implementation of institutional structures and policies based on networks and partnerships. Basing on their field research, the authors demonstrate that the type of local political culture, the level of generalized trust and collective leadership are found among the main determinants of in/effective patterns of network- and partnership-based local governance in Eastern Poland.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie, rozwój lokalny, partnerstwa, sieci, lokalne grupy działania, Polska Wschodnia
Keywords: governance, local development, partnerships, networks, Local Action Groups, Eastern Poland
Introduction

The turn of the twentieth and twenty-first century was marked by mounting efforts to execute a transition from government to governance in most areas of social life, including public policy-making and policy implementation. The core idea of the intended change was to restructure the dominant mode in which societies – at least in the global North – had been governed and administered over most of the twentieth century, with some aspects and cases reaching partly back to the nineteenth century. Most importantly, the restructuring has involved a more or less radical withdrawal of the state and its agencies from the centre stage as far as directing, steering and organizing societal development is concerned. What was proposed instead of the state's monopoly in this respect was an idea that panoply of existing and to be created agencies and actors – public, semi-public and private – could largely independently of the state (or with the state's much more limited involvement than before) be responsible for and better manage growth and development of societies.

Two major routes were devised to implement and institutionalize this new idea. The first, starting in the era of Thatcher's (in the United Kingdom) and Reagan's (in the USA) neoliberal reforms, was to make the state “wither away” and to transform the public sphere into a multitude of various crisscrossing markets, infusing it with logics and ethics typical of (neo-classical) market economy. This route ended up with the rise of the New Public Management (NPM), embracing both an ideology of governing (a political rationality), a managerial doctrine and a set of institutional and policy practices bent on deregulation and privatization of the public sphere, especially in the dimension of public goods production and public services delivery. The second route, emergent in the late 1990s in some northern European countries, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and to some extent Germany, when the excesses of the NPM approach in Anglo-American societies and elsewhere started to be revealed, was to partially recuperate the public/societal interest from the vicissitudes of unbridled markets, opaque quasi-markets and unaccountable quangos\(^1\). This was to be done by wider opening up public policy-making and public policy implementation to a variety of organized social and civil society actors who were to participate in the policy processes alongside the other actors: administrative, political, economic and quasi-economic ones. The underlying rationale behind this turn was to involve – empower was the keyword – (organized) civil society in the policy processes not only in order to diminish the state’s and the market’s interests predominance over civil society's ones but also (perhaps more importantly) in order to pool all available resources for the sake of the system’s growth and development.

\(^1\) Quangos – quasi nongovernmental organizations.
The following paper is mainly concerned with the latter of the aforementioned routes to modern governance, especially as implemented in the field of regional and local development. It focuses in more detail on one crucial aspect of the modern governance: the network- and partnership-based approach to local development. Not denying many real and potential virtues of the network- and partnership-based approach, the paper, nonetheless, draws attention to its limitations. This is because both theoretical and empirical research on new modes of governance as applied in Poland after the systemic change of 1989, and especially following the country’s accession to the European Union in 2004, seems to indicate that on top of some generic problems inherent in this approach – such as its demanding, largely normative presuppositions concerning the nature and objectives of the partners involved, the governability trap involved and its adverse effects on trust in political institutions – in this country this approach proves to be even more problematic, especially when applied indiscriminately (or mechanistically enforced).

Accordingly, the paper starts with a theoretical discussion of the concept of governance drawing attention to its main varieties and emphasizing some of the general presuppositions that may circumscribe its successful application in the area of public policy. In this part of the paper three “ideal models” are analyzed: classical PA (public administration); neoliberal NPM (new public management) and NPG (new public governance), whereby the network- and partnership-based approach is attributed to the NPG model. Subsequently, the paper points out some preconditions associated with advocacy and institutionalization of network- and partnership-based modes of governance in the EU. This is followed by a discussion of some specific conditions that seem to have a bearing on its application in post-1989 Poland, especially as far as the field of regional and local development. Further, to anchor the insights deeper in empirical research, a recent case study is presented featuring intersectoral partnerships in the Podkarpackie voivodship. Finally, some conclusions based on the research are offered.

Public governance – unpacking the umbrella term

As persuasively argued by Osborne (2010a), the dominant (now global) Western model of public policy-making, policy implementation, public goods production and services delivery regime could – from a historical-theoretical point of view – be described as evolving and passing through three stages or models. These comprise: an ideal model of Public Administration (dominant from the late nineteenth century onwards to the late 1970s/early 1980s); an ideal model of the New Public Management (en vogue from the 1980s until 2000s); and an ideal model of the New Public Governance (nascent in the 2000s and triumphing until now). Importantly, the temporal succession of those ideal models has not been

---

2 This term is used throughout the present paper in its Weberian meaning.
translated into a complete, or even decisive, erasure of a predecessor by a successor. Rather, those ideal models have continued to exist side by side, even though mutually strongly affecting each other’s scope of application, mode of functioning and level of efficacy.

These three ideal models could be distinguished from one another and compared by using several criteria and complex indicators, such as the type of the political system presupposed; the type of presupposed relationship between “politics” and “administration” or between “the state”, “economy” and “civil society”; the perceived main source of added value/quality in public policy making and implementing; the type and characteristics of agents included in the public policy processes (both policy making and policy implementing); the type of dominant rules of conduct within the public sphere; the type of logics/ethics informing the agents and guiding their actions; the type of policy budgeting; the type of evaluation criteria for public goods production and public service delivery etc. Table 1 below offers an apt comparison of the aforementioned three ideal models using some of these and a few other criteria/indicators.

Notably, each of the three ideal models might be usefully proved to be rooted in quite different ideological premises. Those diverging ideological roots are responsible for their presupposed value bases and normative assumptions behind their declared aims, goals, objectives and their preferred instruments. Most generally, while the classical model of Public Administration could be related to both conservative and social democratic ideas about the state-economy-society relations which are structured and balanced by the hegemonic state, the New Public Management model clearly subscribes to the neoliberal “minimal state-maximal market” vision of societal organization. By contrast, the New Public Governance model seems most mixed in this respect, betraying influences as diverse as neocorporatism, communitarianism and liberalism, to name but a few.
Table 1. Main features distinguishing Public Administration (PA), New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG) as public policy making and public policy implementation regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model/Key features</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>NPM</th>
<th>NPG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the state</td>
<td>unitary</td>
<td>regulatory</td>
<td>plural and pluralist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main focus</td>
<td>the political system</td>
<td>the organization</td>
<td>the organization and its environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on</td>
<td>policy creation and implementation</td>
<td>management of organizational resources and performance</td>
<td>negotiation of values, meanings and relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief resource allocation mechanism</td>
<td>hierarchy</td>
<td>the market and classical or neo-classical contracts</td>
<td>networks and relational contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the public service system</td>
<td>closed</td>
<td>open rational</td>
<td>open closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value base</td>
<td>public sector ethos</td>
<td>efficacy of competition and the marketplace</td>
<td>dispersed and contested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Osborne 2010a: 10

Building upon and adding to the features in the table above, one could state that the model of PA is characterized by the predominance of “hard” laws and rules originating from the political centre of an unitary and hierarchical political system and that it presupposes a monopoly of fully institutionalized public agencies in the field of public policy making and public policy implementing with a central role envisaged for the state bureaucracy, which translates into a clear preference for a vertical division of labor, formal rules of conduct and fully institutionalized linkages and relations within arenas and between agencies related to public policy making and implementing. Notably, the whole of the policy processes is held to reflect objective, impartial, rational and long-term goals of the whole system/society. The weaknesses of this model are familiar, including its structural rigidity and periodical functional detachment from “real life” developments; its slowness to adapt and respond to new challenges; its considerable inefficiencies and cost/value ratio shortcomings.

However, this model has also multiple strengths, with a function of providing systemic stability and taking advantage of economies of scale in the public sector; generating predictability and trust; possessing strong decision-making capacity and in-built rules of accountability as well as an ability to impose/endow overall direction to public (collective) action. Also, as far as policies of development, this is a model clearly oriented towards top-down leveling out of developmental gaps (predominantly by means of redistribution and interventionism). This model was
for instance typical of regional policies carried out in the era of the Keynesian welfare state.

By contrast, the model of NPM dispenses – at least in theory – with an image of a political system which is hierarchically structured, steered politically from the centre and best operated by public agencies and personnel who are faithful to the spirit of the Weberian rational bureaucracy. Instead, an emphasis is put on divorcing the political from the public, dismantling state-promoted formal structures, laws and rules, including in the area of territorial development, since these are said to inhibit improved performance in the public sector, incurring also undue costs to the public budget because of lacking competition within. Therefore, one of the basic changes involves creating separate policy-making and policy-implementing agencies. Subsequently, creating markets and quasi-markets within the particular domains of the public sector as well as making public goods producers and service delivery agents compete against each other is presented as a way to ensure supreme cost management and efficiency in the public sphere. As wide as possible use of markets, competition and contracts, claimed to be modeled on the private-sector, is actively encouraged and/or enforced. In contrast to the PA model, in which the state bureaucracy is claimed to have the most perfect available knowledge of societal needs and means to satisfy those needs, in the NPM such knowledge is ascribed to the market.

As far as the model’s weaknesses, it might be sufficient to quote its ex-ardent proponent Osborne, who now states that “[t]he NPM has been criticized most devastatingly for its intraorganizational focus in an increasingly plural world and for its adherence to the application of outdated private-sector techniques to public policy implementation and public services delivery – and in the face of evidence about their inapplicability […]” (Osborne 2010a: 4, emphasis in the original). To the long list of its failings, one could just add an almost complete erasure of long-term and strategic planning and frequent reduction of public policies to a series of disjoint, largely short-term projects carried out by ad hoc units, teams or agencies commissioned to do so by the state. As a result, the advantages of economies of scale are in the public sector largely lost. In addition, as argued by Kettle, those changes tend to result in a situation whereby public/state agencies start to be “responsible for a system over which they [have] little control” (Kettle 1993: 207 as quoted in Osborne 2010a: 7). It is only rarely noticed that one further serious consequence of the trend is to undermine public opinion’s trust in political institutions since elected politicians – ceding control over public goods/services production and delivery to the market or quasi-market actors – increasingly find themselves unable to deliver what promised to their voters (cf. Harvey, 2008; Kennew, 2010; Peters 2010).

However, the model of the NPM has had some advantages as well. Among them, there were some merits as far as reducing persistent overstaffing in the pu-
Public sector, initial rationalization of costs incurred by bureaucratic structures, inculcating more flexibility and professionalization in the production and management of public goods and services. Also, as far as policies of regional and local development, it did contribute to their devolution and decentralization, making them also more sensitive to needs/requirements of private-sector investors and entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, the resulting dispersion, fragmentation, discontinuity and ultimately rising and not diminishing long-term systemic costs appear to have overshadowed these merits, not to mention the more fundamental issue raised by unrestrained commercialization and privatization of public goods and services, including in seriously disadvantaged and underdeveloped areas.

In turn, the new public governance model presupposes a “plural and pluralist state” (Osborne 2010a; see also Kooiman 2010), meaning a negotiated co-existence of a variety of developmental aims, diverse logics of collective action, multiple agencies active in the public sphere, a multitude of stakeholders to be involved in policy-making and policy-implementing. Moreover, no single tier of authority, no single agency and no single category of stakeholders is presumed to have complete knowledge of the societal needs and means to satisfy those needs. As a result, for instance, the crucial field of policy of development is vertically layered and horizontally segmented to encompass all possible inputs, with strong encouragement given to linkages made across the layers or segments (sectors). However, the NPG model repairs, at least in theory, some of the weaknesses of the exuberantly dispersed and fragmented NPM arrangements by recognizing that the field of public policy-making and policy-implementing needs to be “orchestrated” by the state and its agencies, while leaving considerable leeway for the other stakeholders’ initiatives – for instance regional and local authorities, business partners, non-governmental organizations etc. Also, there is some recognition that development, unlike growth, is a long-term affair.

In parallel to the NPM model’s drive for blurring the lines dividing the public and the private sector to the advantage of the latter, the NPG model might be said to be interested in lowering and perforating barriers between three sectors: the statist, the private-economic and the private-civil society one. While the differences...
rent identities of actors anchored in those three sectors are recognized and largely upheld, it is nevertheless claimed that their structural and functional separation has to be overcome by bringing them together within particular policy arenas. Their joint inclusion and collaboration is seen as essential for further growth/sustainable development of societies, which is perceived as a complex and multifaceted task requiring sharing/pooling resources, collective action and long-term (voluntary) involvement. Therefore, almost by definition, the new public governance model is premised upon and requires that two key factors are present within the semi-open field of public policy making and implementing, that is networks and partnerships.

**Networks and partnerships – assumptions and prerequisites**

*Networks* are thought to be structures superior to both markets and hierarchies as far as delivering socially desired outcomes, especially in the conditions of imperfect information, extreme changeability, volatility and uncertainty typical of the globalizing world. This is predominantly because of their structural and functional flexibility, which is believed to allow for faster (than in the case of conventional PA) communication, mobilization and adjustment in face of challenges. Moreover, they are believed to create better (and cheaper) frameworks for more inclusive participation in power and decision-making, thus supposedly providing for empowerment of so far excluded/marginalized milieus/actors. In the case of policy networks, their being more inclusive is further argued to translate into enhanced democratic legitimacy enjoyed ultimately by the whole political system (cf. Kooiman 2010). Finally, themselves being open-closed systems, they are claimed to avoid both rigidity typical of bureaucratic structures and instability typical of entropic markets.

However, networks may generate just as many difficulties and problems as benefits and advantages, especially when treated as dominant and not supplementing/facilitating structures for (deciding about and) the production and delivery of public goods/services (cf. Klijn 2003). On top of their poor decision-making capacities (as compared to the PA model), hidden power relations, deficient transparency and lacking accountability, some of their critics say that networks can actually be even more exclusionary than either markets or hierarchies (cf. Kennet

---

5 It is worth emphasizing that regulations applied to non-governmental organizations in Poland, especially the ones following the adoption of the law on public utility organizations and volunteering of 2003, have tended to transform the NGOs into regular firms, making them less and less “civil” and diminishing their independency both from the state and the market (cf. Graff 2009; see also http://lepszyswiat.saloon24.pl/133939, ngo-obywatkosk-kontrolowana and http://www.civitas.edu.pl/pub/nasza_uczelnia/projekty_badawcze/Model_wspolpracy/ISP%20Ekspertyza%20nr%202.PDF).
Moreover, their stability and sustainability can be questionable, depending on many unpredictable and uncontrollable factors – both internal and external. Therefore, networks (NPG), being more reliable and governable than markets (NPM), are less stable and dependable than hierarchies (PA). These characteristics should be kept in mind while designing/evaluating structural-institutional arrangements for specific policy arenas, such as regional and local development policies.

Partnerships are believed to be superior modes of bringing together diverse types of actors – conceptualized as stakeholders – within various policy arenas. This is mainly because of two presuppositions. Firstly, it is seen that in the framework of partnerships both ends of specific “public value chains” may meet, bargain and cooperate in order to achieve – within a specific policy arena, programme or project – the best cost/value ratio achievable in the given empirical circumstances. Secondly, it is presumed that partnership arrangements lead to better mobilization of societal resources in the conditions of permanent resource scarcity typical of contemporary neoliberalizing states. Namely, because of their diversified, overlapping and crisscrossing membership they are heralded as most effective generators of an enlarged spectrum of developmental resources, including not only economic, but also social, cultural and symbolic types of capital (cf. Bourdieu 2001). On top of that they are perceived as vehicles for trust. In consequence, the partners are believed to recognize each other’s specific needs and priorities and to arrive at an informed consensus concerning what and how much of is to be done to meet their needs and priorities by making a recourse to public/private resources and by means of collective action.

Further, partnerships’ acclaimed superiority – to both free market contracting and rigorous bureaucratic enforcement – could be said to derive from their two other assumed features. These are: “equal footing” involvement of the various types of stakeholders and relative flexibility of their common objectives (which are to be negotiated and bargained for both in terms of interests and values) as well as means of their achieving. Basing upon those two features (on top of presumed reciprocal trust), partnerships are expected to produce two crucial advantages as far as policy-making and policy-implementing are concerned. Namely, they are said to significantly lower transaction costs involved in arranging for societal development and to significantly increase the level of (voluntary) compliance of the stakeholders involved. As a result, public policy aims are believed to be easier (and cheaper) to attain.

However, there are a few major problems with partnerships in the realm of real-life public policies. These might be both deduced from theory and observed in practice – including in those systems (Northern and Western European) in which the partnership approach was first devised and implemented in the field of public policy. Unavoidably, much graver problems might be expected to arise as
they do when the partnership approach is applied in/imposed upon systems whose underlying structures and cultures do not correspond with the assumptions and prerequisites inherent in the original approach. The most serious of those problems include: 1) absence of expected (suitable) partners; 2) absence of expected (individual and pooled) resources; 3) inability to negotiate expected (common) objectives; 4) inability to produce expected (desired) outcomes; 5) contested legitimacy; 6) diminished transparency; 7) diminished accountability; 8) free-riding; 9) predatory behavior; 10) clientelist relations; 11) rising transaction costs; 12) façade nature of partnerships; 13) low level of interpersonal and/or institutional trust; and weak traditions of intersectoral cooperation. Noteworthy, even though analytically distinguishable, these problems might overlap in practice, as they do.

Turning to the Polish experience, it is to be reminded that the network- and partnership-based approach started to be tested in the field of public policies as early as the beginning of the 1990s (cf. Gąsior-Niemiec 2009; Furmankiewicz, Królikowska 2010). Noteworthy, at the start it was much more embedded in the NMP model rather than the NPG one. One of the reasons for this was the prevalence of the neoliberal agenda during systemic restructuring in post-1989 Poland, basically as instituted by the Washington (and then post-Washington) Consensus whose spirit and letter were quite evident for example in the World Bank-supervised and “loan-sponsored” institutional and policy innovations introduced in the country. One such good example is provided by the case Program Aktywizacji Obszarów Wiejskich (Rural Development Programme) which was implemented in the early 2000s in selected Polish regions, including in Polska Wschodnia (Eastern Poland). However, starting in the later 1990s, the European Union’s PHARE and other pre-accession assistance programmes significantly contributed to the spread of the network- and partnership-based approach, especially as far as regional and local developmental agenda and the discourse thereof are concerned (Gąsior-Niemiec 2003; 2009; Hausner 2007; see also Furmankiewicz, Królikowska 2010).

Despite the much more frequent failures than successes of the approach (as for instance evidenced by the successive waves of failing territorial local labour market pacts), its implementation in Poland gained momentum in the early 2000s. This was because of several reasons, both internal and external. As far as the external reasons, the main of them concerned the European Union’s structural funds which, in many cases, could be made available to the Polish beneficiaries only on the condition that they formed a partnership. However, as already mentioned, the pressure of the EU’s normative discourse of subsidiarity and partnership played also a role in this respect (cf. Gąsior-Niemiec 2002). As far as the internal reasons, one should single out an unprecedented (and effective) mobilization of the Third Sector elites, which resulted in their successful lobbying for creating a legal basis for non-governmental organizations to be included in policy-making and policy-implementation processes.

---

6 These are discussed in more detail in Gąsior-Niemiec 2012 (forthcoming).
ses, including in the most lavishly funded by the EU areas of rural development, regional development and social policy (cf. Gąsior-Niemiec, Gliński 2006). By 2012 this approach became a standard in these policy areas.

As argued elsewhere (Gąsior-Niemiec 2010) and confirmed by other research, including international (see e.g. Bobińska-Kolarska 2009; Boerzel 2009; Swianiewicz et al. 2008), despite mounting efforts to graft and “naturalize” the network- and partnership-based approach to policy-making and policy-implementing in Poland, several deeply ingrained features of the Polish political system and Polish political culture as well as attitudes exhibited by Polish society in general have continued to work against the expected benefits of this approach. Among those features, one could list: weakness of the state and its institutions (Boerzel 2009); weakness of civil society (Gąsior-Niemiec, Gliński 2006); disaggregation and lacking civic ethos within the private sector; staunchly materialist value orientations of Poles (Bartkowski 2009); pervasive distrust and lacking sense of a common good in Polish society (Czapiński, Panek 2011); clientelist “habits of the heart” inherent in the Polish institutional landscape (Grosse 2009; Gąsior-Niemiec 2009). Those features are largely responsible for the fact that networks and partnerships established for policy aims more often than not turn out to be ineffective or facade institutions (but see also Wódz, Wódz 2007; Furmankiewicz, Królíkowska 2010).

Still, it could be argued that the recorded failings and weaknesses may not preclude altogether the applicability of the network- and partnership-based approach as far governance within the Polish public policies is concerned, especially at the regional and local level. In the defense of the approach, it might be hoped that being an innovation copied from an alien political-cultural environment, this approach just needs to be better learnt and perhaps somewhat domesticated by the Poles. One crucial way to follow upon this hope is to monitor and provide feedback on further processes of networks’ and partnerships’ creation and their subsequent operation, including both short-term and longer-term results. One crucial policy area in which it should be done is the policy of regional and local development, including in rural areas. Research of this kind is especially recommended in those regions/local communities which have been granted access to considerable funding footed by the EU under condition that the discussed approach will be applied by potential beneficiaries. To illustrate this kind of research, below the case of so called Lokalne Grupy Działania (Local Action Groups [LAGs]) in the Podkarpackie Voivodship will be presented and discussed.

Unfortunately, the preliminary findings based on this case study seem to provide evidence that recently established partnerships, found in the area of rural

---

7 It needs to be added that this mobilization and effectiveness were greatly helped by the personal involvement of Jerzy Hausner – the then Minister of Economy and Social Policy, and a de facto “minister for the EU structural funds” – otherwise a university professor, a policy expert and an ardent advocate of the new public governance model.
development, in this region of Polska Wschodnia are largely façade institutions, in addition the ones that are often treated instrumentally by public authorities local as well as regional ones. Heralded as innovative vehicles to promote supra-local development in disadvantaged rural areas of Podkarpacie, in their majority the analyzed LAGs appear to have been created because of a mixture of two main reasons: 1) formal pressure (“structural coercion”) originating in the EU and transmitted to regional and local Poland by the EU’s funding “Managing Institutions”, that is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and its regional/local agencies and 2) self-interested (utilitarian/profit-seeking) behavior of some of the “partners” involved, usually inspired by the local authorities (cf. Halamska 2005; Furmankiewicz, Krółikowska 2010).

The case of intersectoral partnerships in the Podkarpackie Voivodship

Intersectoral partnerships and the practice of new modes of governance

Intersectoral partnership (IP) – understood in terms of voluntary cooperation of entities representing three sectors (public, private, civic/social) who are engaged in the process of identifying and defining problems of public nature and jointly attempt to elaborate solutions to those problems, enjoying equal footing as far as sharing resources, responsibilities, risks and benefits – steadily becomes a standard approach to public policy-making and policy-implementing at all levels – European, national, regional and local. Over the recent years IPs are promoted specifically by the EU as one of the preferred mechanisms to carry out its policies as well as the policies in the EU’s Member States. The sweeping move toward regionalization and decentralization of public goods and services delivery, combined with the principle of subsidiarity, makes regional and local development policies almost “natural” arenas for such partnerships to be created.

In the following case study, IPs are exemplified by thirty-one network-like structures called Local Action Groups (further referred to as LAGs) which have been created in the Podkarpackie Voivodship within the framework of EU-funded programmes to trigger and sustain rural development. The Podkarpackie LAGs are made up of public, private and civil society partners located within the region’s rural areas. Their setting up was in addition explicitly premised on

8 The empirical evidence presented and discussed in this part of the paper has been produced by research carried out within the project titled The Intersectoral Partnership in the Process of Creation and Implementation of Local Development Strategies in the Podkarpackie Region, which is executed by the Unit for Public Administration and Public Policy at the Department of Political Science at the University of Rzeszów in Podkarpacie.
a condition that the number of participants from the public sector included in any
LAG must not exceed 50 percent of all of its participants. In the current, domestic
round of the programme LEADER+ (PPL+) – which has been financed from
the EU’s structural funds and administered in Poland by the Ministry of Agri-
culture and Modernization of Rural Areas supported by its regional agencies (such as
ARMiR) and regional self-governmental authorities – the LAGs receive financial
assistance which is earmarked for implementing their collaboratively created stra-
tegies of local development. These strategies had been prepared a few years before
by the LAGs in the framework of the previous round of the same programme.

The aim of the following case study is to present how the LAG partnerships
in Podkarpackie were created and how they operate in reference to collaborative
implementation of their strategies of local development. Noteworthy, adding to
the theoretical premises discussed in the first part of the present paper, the study
is informed by an assumption – derived from the path-dependency theory
– that on the one hand the existing political and administrative culture consid-
érably affects the LAGs’ modes of functioning, while, on the other hand, the Po-
lish LAGs basically just follow and imitate models and patterns established earlier
in the old Member States of the European Union (EU-15), including both their
good and bad practices (cf. Halamska 2005).

Given the still strong position of conventional, bureaucratic PA structures
and their institutional cultures in Poland, including in the Polish regions and lo-
cal communities, which stands in contrast with the still weakly developed domes-
tic Third Sector and poor voluntary engagement of the private sector (economic
partners) in public affairs – including at the regional and local level – it could also
be ventured that, in spite of the legal requirement that the LAG’s partners enjoy
equal standing, in practice we will see that the LAGs are dominated by local (gmi-
na-commune’s) authorities.

Further, drawing upon the so far conducted research on the practice of the Eu-
ropean Union’s funds implementation in Poland, it was hypothesized that the local
partners involved in the LAGs largely took a utilitarian – not to say rent-seeking
– approach to local development (cf. Swianiewicz et. al. 2008; Furmankiewicz,
Królíkowska 2010). In consequence, the intersectoral partnerships that they had
created and operated under PPL+ programmes would be just another way of se-
curing financial support from the public budget/EU’s funds. In addition, it was
hypothesized that the formation of those partnerships had been a direct result
of top-down institutional pressures. In other words, had it not been for the PPL+
as modelled on the EU’s LEADER’s and LEADER+’s) formal requirement to cre-
ate an intersectoral partnership in order to get access to additional funds for local
and supra-local development, those LAGs – in their majority – would not have
come into existence.
As mentioned, the reported empirical data and findings have been produced during the first (quantitative) stage of a research project titled *The Intersectoral Partnership in the Process of Creation and Implementation of Local Development Strategies in the Podkarpackie Region*. The whole project has been planned for the period 2010-2013. Below an outline of the project’s methodology is presented and the results of the quantitative part of the research are adduced and discussed. These will be preceded by a brief discussion of the category of intersectoral partnership against the background of the new public governance theory which was analyzed in the earlier part of the present paper.

Clearly, the category of intersectoral partnership falls within the network-and partnership-approach as part of the NPG theoretical framework. The definition of intersectoral partnership – as presented a few paragraphs before – has been formulated in direct reference to the characteristics of the new public governance model. Most specifically, for the sake of the empirical research on intersectoral partnerships, the new public governance paradigm was mainly interpreted in terms of a set of mechanisms devised with the aim of negotiating and implementing public policies in which participation of various stakeholders drawn from different walks of life is envisaged and required, representing the three major sectors of current democratic systems in Europe, that is public sector *sensu stricto* (namely representatives of the state administration and of regional and local territorial self-government), the economic sector (representatives of entrepreneurs, associations of entrepreneurs etc.) and the civil society sector (social partners, representatives of the Third Sector, non-governmental organizations etc.).

Likewise, the new public governance paradigm (also discussed under the label of “new modes of governance”) might also be specified in terms of a novel decision-making model used in various arenas of public policy, which is premised upon an involvement of all interested stakeholders and their arrival at final decisions concerning the production/delivery of public goods/services by way of reaching a consensus (García 2006: 745). As such, new modes of governance may be expected to constitute a particularly dynamic and interactive policy-making and policy-implementing arrangement (see Boerzel 2009; cf. Gąsior-Niemiec 2010). In structural terms, this kind of arrangement is typically based on networks composed of multiple and diverse actors whose interactions are (or rather are expected to be) premised upon trust-based exchange, owing to which they are able (or rather are expected to be able) negotiate decisions which are satisfying from the vantage point of the interests and values of all of the partners representing all three sectors.

Furthermore, drawing on Peters and Pierre (1998: 225-227), in more technical terms the network- and partnership-based governance arrangements could be characterized by:
• the predominance of shared decision-making: decisions are taken not just by public institutions but by “amorphous collection[s] of actors” who thus determine the catalogues of public services and the manner of providing them;
• the state’s diminished capability to exercise direct control over public policies: state agencies (and similarly regional or local authorities) function more as facilitators/ coordinators in the decision-making networks, whose participants enjoy an equal status;
• the pooling of public and private resources: the state uses non-state actors to attain what it cannot achieve by itself and *vice versa*;
• the use of a wider spectrum of instruments to implement the goals of public policy: this includes an application of “unconventional” methods and tools aimed at obtaining/mobilizing developmental resources, producing public goods, providing public services etc.

One pragmatic justification behind an increased application of the new modes of governance in contemporary states stipulates that they might be a preferred model of public decision-making in a situation when public institutions are not able to achieve their objectives: 1) using exclusively resources at their disposal (public resources are limited); 2) depending only on their imperfect knowledge of societal needs & interests (some of which are weakly articulated in the process of political competition); 3) basing solely on conventional (representative) forms of decision-making that are characterized by an increasingly diminished level of acceptance by the public opinion and ever lower satisfaction with their final results (the probability of social conflict is high); and 4) making use of conventional instruments to produce/distribute public goods/services.

On top of that, Jessop (2007) argues that the new modes of governance may constitute an interesting example of inscribing an “ethical” dimension in the governing/governance discourses and practices. According to him, this is especially so with the concept of “good governance” (Jessop 2007: 6; an emphasis added), which seems to point out at some “ideal” state of public affairs that is promised to materialize once the requirements of “good” governance are met. However, it is to be stressed, that the purported “ethical” aspects of the new public governance do not provide for a satisfactory resolution of issues such as the much diminished accountability characteristic of “good governance” institutions and processes: networks responsible for decision-making processes within such – much extended and crowded – public sphere (and taking decisions seemingly on behalf of and in the interest of democratic constituencies) are neither representative of those constituencies nor accountable to them according to standard democratic principles (cf. Soerensen 2005).
Methodology of the LAG research

The reported research is focused on investigating mechanisms to create IPs as exemplified by Local Action Groups located in the Podkarpackie Voivodship. It provides an insight into the forms taken by those IPs, their membership, decision-making processes, promotion and information activities, as well as their role in local/rural development of the region, including empowerment of civil society and mobilization of local communities for common goals.

At the beginning of the research project the following research questions were asked:

1. What is the degree of the IPs’ innovativeness and to what extent they are seen as “alien” modes of governance? Are they a product of endogenous creativity or rather of “structural constraints” imposed by the EU?
2. To what degree does the emergence and operation of the IPs depend on political, administrative and civic culture of the region, including the cultures of the particular local communities?
3. Are the IPs well embedded in their respective local communities? What is their potential to survive without the EU’s support?
4. Are the IPs inclusive and representative vis-à-vis their local communities? Is the requirement of 50% participation of business and civil society partners satisfied?

Furthermore, the research has been guided by the following hypotheses:

1. The IPs are mostly “compulsory” structures; they are innovative but may fall prey to traditional modes of governing and hierarchical decision-making patterns.
2. Although the IPs are the platform for cooperation between the three sectors, they are dominated by the representatives of local governments – who are the usual “architects” of the local IPs.
3. Organizational patterns of the IPs follow directly legal requirements and usually involve copying foreign models; however the IPs are trying to adapt their institutionalization patterns to the local conditions.
4. The IPs have a chance to become stimulators of local development, however this is premised upon the condition that local authorities overcome their tendency to dominate the partnerships and their supporting networks. Only then client-oriented culture will be transformed into a culture of equal involvement of all of the actors concerned in decision-making processes, while strategies/programmes of local development will correspond to the local needs, resources and aspirations of local communities.

The research has had its quantitative and qualitative dimension. What is reported below refers to the preliminary results produced during the quantitative dimension of the research project, which was based on questionnaires addressed to all members of all of the LAGs in the Podkarpackie region. The questionnaire included questions about the following issues: actors who initiated and now par-
participate in the LAGs; profiles of the LAGs’ activities and their objectives; the way of coopting/attracting partners to the LAGs; operation of the LAGs’ boards; decision-making patterns in the LAGs and within the LAGs’ boards; consultation strategies and practices of the LAGs; relations and contacts between the LAGs’ members and their respective local communities; future prospects of the LAGs.

The questionnaire was distributed when LAGs’ general assemblies were convened. It reached all of the members of the LAGs – both individuals and representatives of their corporate members. In total, 518 members from 26 LAGs (84% of all of the LAGs registered in Podkarpacie) filled out the questionnaire. They constituted 33 percent of all identified members of all of the LAGs in the region. The least number of returns per LGD was 1; the highest number – 41; the medium number of returns per LAG was 20. To process the data generated by the questionnaire, the SPSS application was used.

Results of the research and discussion of the results

In terms of the LAGs’ membership categories’ distribution, the respondents who filled out and returned the questionnaire represented:

- local governments: 26,6% of the respondents
- federations of local governments: 1,4% of the respondents
- NGOs: 19,7% of the respondents
- business partners: 8,1% of the respondents
- individuals: 34,4% of the respondents
- other types of participants: 1,7% of the respondents
- missing identification: 8,1% of the respondents.

Generally, the obtained results have demonstrated that the Podkarpacie’s LAGs have observed the principle of at least fifty-percent share of other than public sector members. Those representing NGOs, business, individuals and other categories of membership constitute together 63,9% of all of the respondents. However, in this context the low number of business members involved in the region’s LAGs must be strongly stressed, which is thought to undermine longer-term endogenous viability of those partnerships and to make/or them excessively dependent on public funding (by the EU, the Polish state and regional/local authorities). Interestingly, over 1/3 of the respondents identified themselves as being members of other partnerships.

Based on the questionnaire, the core mission of the LGDs was identified as authorizing, updating and implementing strategies of local development. According to the Gmina Government Act of March 8th 1990, authorities established at the commune’ s (gmina’s) level exercise all powers related to those local matters that are not reserved for other tiers of authorities. Community development is major among such matters. Therefore, it could be ventured that the gmina terri-
Editorial governments are in a way “by their nature” interested in the IPs as a mechanism that might be used to support their efforts in the field of local development. Results of the reported research confirm this assertion clearly.

According to 74.8 percent of the respondents, the intersectoral partnerships were initiated by local authorities (see table 1). Only slightly more than a dozen of them indicated an NGO as the chief architect of their LAGs. Just a few pointed out at an individual person as a LAG’s initiator. Still fewer named a business partner as an actor who helped start the partnership. Therefore, there seems no doubt that the leading role has been played in this respect by the local authorities. Their dominant role, apart from the arguments and hypotheses already presented in the preceding paragraphs, might be further explained by several pragmatic factors, such as: 1) the local authorities have had better access to information about the LEADER and LEADER+ programmes, including details regarding their required structures, rules of operation and funding available to the potential IPs as well as regarding the knowledge of procedures to subsequently evaluate the LAGs; 2) the local authorities have had far better access to regional authorities which – in accordance with the regulations issued by the central Institution Managing the EU-funded rural development programme (i.e. the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) – have been selected as managing institution responsible for the LEADER and LEADER+ programme local implementation and supervision; 3) the local public administration employees are better trained to take advantage of the EU programmes and so they proved to be better prepared to implement procedures involved in the creation of the IPs and their subsequent operation.

As far as the local NGOs, officially they constitute a sizeable sector in the region: there are about 8 000 not-for profit associations and foundations registered in Podkarpacie. However, in reality approximately only 1500 of them are active and capable of forming partnerships such as the analyzed IPs. Moreover, even the most active of those NGOs are, in their majority, weak in structural and fi-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of actor</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of local business</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to say</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on the authors’ database
Financial terms, which translates into their weak “partner” status. Furthermore, in many cases, the expertise of their staff and quality of their volunteering networks do not quite correspond with the needs and exigencies typical of the analyzed intersectoral partnerships (cf. Gumkowska, Herbst, Radecki, 2008: 12-15; see also Raport z badań… 2008: 10 and Furmankiewicz, Królikowska 2010).

The regional business sector, whose scant representation in the Podkarpackie’s LAGs has already been indicated, seems to share the same drawbacks as the regional Third Sector. However, the low level of participation of business partners in local IPs has also been evidenced in other European countries, such as Ireland and Finland (see for example Esparcia, Moseley and Casals 2000: 96; cf. Kull 2009). This phenomenon might signal a major structural weakness that undermines the very idea and significance of intersectoral partnerships as an arrangement to collectively and voluntarily provide for local/regional development. However, this stipulation needs to be checked in more depth across other EU Member States, including other Polish regions. Two important business partner categories to be specifically expected to be found in such partnerships are local cooperative banks and local cooperatives.

As far as reasons for which their LAGs have been established, the respondents usually indicated more than one factor. Nonetheless, it could be stated that the decisive reason for the LAGs’ establishment were local needs. However, nearly half of the surveyed persons quite frankly pointed out the need to institutionalize intersectoral cooperation as a prerequisite related to securing their access to financial resources of the EU. Only every fifth respondent chose an option referring to some earlier cooperative traditions in the area of local development as the basis for current collaboration within the LAGs.

These results make us tentatively conclude that despite seeming richness of social capital in the region (as evidenced by the number of the NGOs and the evidence of earlier rounds of network- and partnership-based programmes implemented in the regions as early as the first half of the 1990s – see Furmankiewicz, Królikowska 2010: ch.3), traditions of intersectoral cooperation are weak or they have played virtually no role when considering the IPs’ creation. In this context the enterprising role of the local authorities in reference to the IPs becomes more understandable. Also, it agrees with the prevalent perception in the region that it is the local authorities who are responsible for local development, including provision of developmental resources. However, if the conclusion is correct, it might mean that the other partners in the IPs are indeed more motivated by purely utilitarian factors, including rent-seeking – these tentative conclusions are to be verified during the qualitative stage of the research project.

As far as identifying potential partners, the majority of the respondents indicated that all individuals and corporate bodies that might be interested in participation were invited to participate in the LAGs (see table 2 below). About 10
percent of the surveyed answered that only selected institutions and organizations were invited to take part in their LAG’s creation. Nevertheless, the actual mode of selecting potentially interested local partners remains at this stage of the research rather unclear. For example, we have not learnt exactly whether all business organizations and NGOs were invited/just selected to participate in the IPs. If they were preselected, what were the criteria of their preselection? And who was responsible for formulating those preselection criteria? Every fourth surveyed person pointed to “informal contacts” as a form of recruitment. That might signal the existence of self-organizing local communities since it is usually claimed that mostly it is informal ties that help build social networks for decision-making in the area of local development and public services delivery (cf. Hardina, Middleton, Montana, Simpson 2007: 357-359). However, this might also be a symptom of the predominance of clientelist and patronage linkages within the analyzed local communities. These issues will be further investigated during the qualitative stage of the reported research project.

Table 2. How your LAG’s members were recruited?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All institutions and organizations that could be interested in participation were invited</td>
<td>79,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected institutions and organizations were invited</td>
<td>9,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about the LAG and invitation to participate in it was published on the website</td>
<td>20,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on the LAG and invitation to participate in it was made public in a customary manner</td>
<td>18,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal contacts were used</td>
<td>26,7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on the authors’ database

In this respect the results of our survey of the IPs in Podkarpacie are again comparable with the results of the research carried out for example in Ireland (the PRIDE survey) (Moseley, Cherrett, Cawles 2001: 185-186). As far as the importance of informal ties in local partnerships, this issue was also highlighted by Adams who argued that participation and engagement in local matters do not need official procedures. On the contrary, Adams was convinced that members of the community concerned are likely to resort to informal ways to influence local affairs (Adams 2007: 32-33). We are also inclined to believe that cooperation on the local level is mostly dependent on the density and strength of informal linkages. Without such linkages even the most favorable formal – legal and financial – conditions would not result in vibrant local development partnerships. However, what matters most is the type of the informal ties and linkages involved: whether they are typical of civic cultures or the ones plagued by amoral familism (cf. Putnam 1995).
As far as the manner in which decisions are taken within the analyzed LAGs, the procedures seem to be modelled upon those typical of representative democracy – which clearly clashes with the presuppositions (and hopes) inscribed in the theory of new public governance (see table 3 below). The overwhelming majority of the respondents pointed at voting in response to the questions concerning decision-making in their LAGs. The majoritarian voting is assumed to be the easiest way of making decisions during the general meetings of the LAGs’ members. Noteworthy, relatively numerous of the LAGs’ members seem to believe that other forms of arriving at decisions are difficult and time-consuming. Only 9.9 percent of the respondents mentioned “reaching consensus without voting” as the mode of decision-making practised in their LAG. These results might be interpreted as evidence of rather “conservative” attitudes towards more deliberative modes of arriving at collective decisions, which – if practiced at all by the respondents – are treated with reservation, possibly because perceived as a kind of foreign practice – untypical of the Polish local political culture. However, the preferred modes of decision-making within the analyzed LAGs might just as well evidence their façade nature.

Table 3. What is the way of making decisions in your LAG?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Decision-Making</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arriving at consensus without voting</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a circular manner</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to say</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing answer</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on the authors’ database

According to the majority of the respondents, their LAGs try to be transparent by informing local communities about their decisions and activities. To this end, they declare using various communication channels and different media. Still, the majority of the surveyed respondents indicated just the LAGs’ websites as the most common way of informing the local people about the groups’ activities. Slightly more than half of the respondents mentioned that the local residents are informed during open sessions of the LAGs. It could be assumed that the latter form of informing the local people is much more demanding for both the LAGs and the local communities involved. On the other hand, it would seem the best possible way to embed the LAG within and to mobilize the local community around common developmental goals as well as generating innovative inputs, building mutual trust, providing instant feedback on the LAGs’ decisions and perfor-
mance. On top of that, open session attended by the local residents would appear to offer a simple and credible way to increase the LAGs’ transparency and accountability. Another, related aspect of these research results – which calls for further investigation – is the fact that the LAGs seem fairly little concerned about consulting their decisions and policy choices with their external environment before the decisions and choices are made.

What is perhaps not surprising in view of our earlier theoretical analyses and hypotheses, in the opinion of the majority of the LAGs’ members who responded to the questionnaire, the LAGs would not have been created had it not been for the EU’s financial support. These results may be interpreted more comprehensively: the EU-promoted and funded LEADER and LEADER+ initiatives (clearly impacting upon the domestic PPL+) were not only the source of financial support for the analyzed IPs but also, or perhaps even first of all, they provided the stimulus for the majority of the members to establish these intersectoral partnerships. Therefore, a pessimistic preliminary conclusion in this respect is that in the case of nearly all analyzed local groups, their members would not have considered establishing an intersectoral partnership focused on communal development, had it not been for external (financial) incentives. Obviously, this provisional conclusion needs to be further verified during in-depth interviews planned for the second part of the reported research project.

Finally, the respondents turned out to be largely undecided when it comes to determining the LAGs’ future prospects after the EU-related financial support is phased out. Almost half of them chose the option “hard to say” in the questionnaire. However, on a more positive note, nearly 1/3 of the respondents seem to believe that their local partnership will survive even without such external assistance. Overall, judging by the respondents’ answers, the future of the LAGs in Podkarpacie seems to depend on: 1) expectations of continued external (EU) support; 2) expected benefits from cooperation between the partners involved; 3) the strength of ties linking the partners before the IP was formed; and 4) aggregate social capital that has emerged as a by-product of their collectively accomplished projects.

Conclusions

Apart from theoretical and ideological stimuli offered by the flowering discourse on new modes of public governance and endogenous local development alongside institutional pressure and financial incentives anchored in the recent EU and national public policy formulas, the deficit of legitimacy suffered by public authorities, their decreasing effectiveness and diminished efficiency in the field of policy-making and policy-implementing amplified by the perceived scarcity of public finance ever more frequently incline political centers to extend the range of actors participating in public decision-making and to modify the exi-
isting institutional and organizational structures – especially as far as crucial policies of regional and local development are concerned. Such changes, captured by an umbrella term of the new public governance, make an increasing recourse to arrangements such as networks and partnerships as preferred structures and modes of deciding about and providing for territorial development.

Noting the many advantages resulting from the application of the network- and partnership-based approach to regional and local development, the present paper, nonetheless, pointed out several of theoretical and empirical limitations of this approach. Those limitations notwithstanding, an increasing tendency of a variety of Polish stakeholders to opt for networks and partnerships as forms and modes of their involvement in policies of development was noted. To account for these developments, the notions of institutional pressure and structural constraints were introduced. To exemplify, early World Bank’s role in promoting this type of public governance in the Polish rural areas as well as the role of the European Union in the field of regional policy was highlighted. Therefore, the current mushrooming of the network- and partnership-based approach in Poland, including in rural areas, is largely due to the offer of EU’s incentives accompanied by formal requirements such as exemplified by the LEADER and LEADER+ (LLP+) rural development programme.

These conclusions are amply illustrated by the case of intersectoral partnerships presented in the empirical part of the present paper. The Local Action Groups established in the Podkarpackie Voivodship have been in their overwhelming majority set up because of the structural constraints imposed by the EU’s regulations concerning public programmes to trigger/sustain rural development, which were copied by the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Even though, theoretically, they are meant to diminish the predominance of conventional (administrative and political partners) in the field of local rural development, in practice the LAGs often turn out to be instruments used by the local authorities because of two major reasons. The first of the reasons could be seen as strategic: since the Polish law makes the commune’s (gmina’s) authorities explicitly responsible for local development, these authorities try to fish out for and pull together all available developmental resources within their reach, including those on the EU’s offer. In this case, they were proved to be the dominant force to initiate establishing the LAGs, even though – in theory – the LAGs are to “undermine” their prevalence in the field of policy of local development to the advantage of the other categories of partners – economic and civil society ones. The second reason could be seen as purely utilitarian: the local authorities, just as practically all of the other members of the IPs, are ready to take any action and to fulfill any criteria in order to get access to the EU-related funds, including setting up local intersectoral partnerships and networks – even though their further, longer-term viability might be questionable at the start.
Overall, as evidenced by the research in Podkarpacie, despite several years of their practising and normative socialization originating in the pervasive discourse of “good governance”, networks, partnerships and negotiated decision-making seem still perceived as alien forms, which are not really compatible with the Polish political and administrative and (for that matter) civic culture. In their operations, the local LAGs prove to be, on average, rather awkward, not particularly participative and not deeply embedded in their local communities. Such conclusions might be drawn from the empirical research so far. Obviously, the reported research project might generate other insights as well once its qualitative phase is completed. However, drawing on experiences from other EU Member States, it could be predicted that this operative awkwardness alongside little potential for endogenous sustainability of the IPs is likely to be confirmed. Thus, far from being a more inclusive and participatory instrument of local development and a vehicle for empowerment of civil society, the local networks and partnerships might just turn out to be another instrument used by the local authorities and other “partners” to secure external funding and pursue their particularistic aims.

References


41. Soerensen E., (2005), The democratic problems and potentials of network governance, “European Political Science”, 4


