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**Partnership governance in the new UE member states. The impact of place-based intervention on the social and economic activity of local communities in Poland.**

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*ABSTRACT: In the paper, institutional features and outcomes of the implementation of the territorial governance concept in the post-communist Poland, undergoing transformation and decentralisation processes, are analysed. The Polish LEADER Pilot Programme (2004-2008) and the impact of the actions undertaken by LAGs on social and economic activity of the inhabitants, are also evaluated. The analysis of the programme organisational structures shows that the central government has been reluctant to implement the territorial governance concept based on quasi non-government organisations, such as LAGs, responsible for local strategy building and for public resource management. The dominant part of the funds was planned to improve technical infrastructure, not social activity, what was probably the reason for the strong position of local authorities in LAGs, but at the same time it turned out to be the weakness of the local voluntary organisation. However, the comparison of statistical indexes in the municipalities supported and the ones not supported by the programme, shows possible positive outcomes of the programme in the development of the non-profit sector in most of the regions in Poland. There was also no significant positive impact on economic development and social welfare level; however, in few peripheral regions the changes were discernible. The analysis of indexes in the period 2003-2007 found a positive role of the LEADER programme in the third sector development and the level of local inhabitants' activities in*

*many regions in Poland, even in the ones where a difficult institutional environment with a great role of hierarchical connections was visible.*

**Key words:** *territorial governance, place-based intervention impact; cross-sectoral partnership; socio-economic activity; rural Poland*

### **1. Introduction**

In western democratic countries, the evolution of policy systems, characterised by markets and hierarchies, towards networks (social, economic, organisational) in a hybrid form of co-ordination, was observed over the last decades. There was a general tendency in the organisation of production and state policies to change their features from vertical integration - pressure for high productivity, a great role of economies of scale, and mass consumption as a regime of accumulation (connected with Fordist principles in economy and central governing in policy sciences), to flexible co-operation networks with a greater role of local knowledge and bottom up processes in resource management (features visible in post-Fordism and governance concept). In Eastern Europe this idea was understood in terms of the need to move from the traditional vertical co-ordination (typical in the communist systems) to the horizontal approach, which meant organising through co-operation “networks” (Campbell and Coulson, 2006). However, the actual process of decentralisation in the post-communist countries was slow and constrained by central administration elites (Regulska, 2009). According to Ray (2006), current processes of rural development can be described as neo-endogenous ones. They are based on the idea that socio-economic well-being can be achieved by restructuring public intervention away from individual sectoral intervention, designed by central authorities, in favour of a mosaic of local/regional territories managed bottom-up by the cross-sectoral organisation of local stakeholders, which better takes into consideration local conditions and needs. These endogenous principles are also important components of the territorial (regional) governance concept (Simard and Chiasson, 2008). According to Bocher (2008), the most important features of the new policy are: (1) increasing self-governing responsibilities of regions; (2) replacing the principle of ‘administrative’ territory by a functional principle; (3) inter-sectoral co-operation through regional networks and partnerships; (4) hierarchical steering of incentives through various instruments and forms (i.e. support programmes and their eligibility rules). In the European Union, the main tool to implement organisational structures enhancing local development have been the LEADER

type initiatives and programmes implemented from the beginning of 1990s. They are commonly evaluated and analysed in literature, with special attention paid to the issues of the efficiency of governance processes, the problems of power relations, social inclusion and stakeholders' engagement in partnerships (Scott, 2003, Barke and Newton, 1997, Ray, 2000, Wade and Rinne, 2008). Yet, there is very little statistical evidence for bottom-up integrated approach impact onto local socio-economic development. The authors underline the fact that self-sufficiency requires the focus on building self-evaluation capacities with the local stakeholders' leading role in evaluation activities (Díaz-Puente, Yagüe, & Afonso, 2008), but this model of evaluation makes it difficult to compare different regions, as the local aims could differ significantly. The external evaluation based on a uniform methodology is important for the governments and the European Union institutions, and would enable geographical comparison of programme results. High and Nemes (2007) distinguished two procedures of programme appraisal: first - the evaluation in terms of its overall aims as a part of central authorities development policy, in which interregional and international comparisons may be relevant, and second – the evaluation of the programme from the standpoint of local strategies, which in different areas can vary considerably making it even impossible to compare them on the inter-regional level.

In the paper, the LEADER+ Pilot Programme (realised in practice in the years 2005-2008, referred to as "PPL +"), the actions of LAGs and their impact on social and economic activity of local communities, were analysed. The Programme encompassed on average 35% of rural and urban-rural municipalities in different regions in Poland (Knieć and Hałasiewicz, 2008). The structure of funds disbursed by LAGs in various regions of the country was analysed on the basis of reports by Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture FAPA (Knieć and Hałasiewicz, 2008) and 149 individual final LAG reports. The comparison of statistical indexes (in municipalities participating and those not participating in the LPP) shows positive outcomes of the programme mainly in the non-profit sector development in most of the regions in Poland. Their impact on the economic development and the social welfare level is, however, weak. The LEADER 4th Axis LAGs, on the other hand, cover more than 93% of rural areas, thus there is no possibility to statistically compare the changes in the areas participating and those not participating in the programmes. Consequently, the historical data about the Pilot Programme could be valuable to show the potential outcomes of actions undertaken in concordance with locally created strategies, but it has to be taken into account that the principles of wide community participation were not widely implemented.

In the first section of the paper, the theoretical aspects of the shift from exogenous to endogenous models of development based on the territorial governance concept are discussed. Next, the analysis of the implementation of territorial governance in Poland and first effects of LAG actions on the social activities of inhabitants are provided. Finally, conclusions regarding programme efficiency in the context of territorial governance type are described.

## ***2. From central state intervention to territorial integrated approach***

The rural policy in most of the European countries from the 1950s until 1970s was dominated by sectoral agricultural issues and focused on supporting agricultural incomes and restructuring farm enterprises (Buunk et al., 1999). In that period, the Keynesian approach dominated regional policy emphasising a significant role of the public sector, including monetary policy actions by the central bank, fiscal policy actions by the government and investment in infrastructure to stabilize output over the business cycle. Theories of regional imbalance with a special attention paid to Perroux's growth pole theory were the most important at that time. This policy was perceived as a form of exogenous development, which in reality often had negative impact on social development in rural (often peripheral) regions (Lošták and Hudečková, 2008).

As a result, both policy experts and academics highlighted the need for new rural development strategies taking into consideration better coordination and greater geographical concentration of the available budgetary resources (Buunk et al., 1999). The popularisation of socio-economic models showing and explaining the advantages of cooperation often connected with rational choice type theories (Ostrom, 1990), directed academics' attention to the concept of endogenous development in which local knowledge, bottom-up actions, and cross-sectoral territorial cooperation were perceived as key features leading to better efficiency of local resource management, the fulfilment of inhabitants' needs, and the enhancement of socio-economic development (Slee, 1994, Adamski and Gorlach, 2007, Ray, 1999). This approach in European literature is often combined with the LEADER type programs, launched in 1990, which promoted self-improvement and self-determination among the rural populations involved (Díaz-Puente et al., 2008). Barke and Newton (1997) stress that endogenous development is a "form of progress where there is local control over the development process". The important tools in enhancing endogenous development processes are the cross-sectoral partnership organisations, as a forum of different local stakeholders' cooperation, and common decision making. Potentially better efficiency of local partnerships in service delivery and local communities' mobilisation for common works could be an effect

of the use of local knowledge, taking into consideration different interests and views, more effective inter-agents coordination, better engagement and motivation of local actors in fulfilling their needs, as well as easier inclination to experiments and innovation than in more static administrative systems. Partnership working has strategic advantages but it can also blur accountability and may be confusing for the public (Campbell and Coulson, 2006).

An awareness of the negative and positive impact of exogenous and endogenous factors in the academic discourse drove the authors to conclusions, that the two kinds of development should not be treated as mutually exclusive categories but it could be advantageous to balance them in development policy (Lowe et al., 1995, Bowler, 1999). Following that view and as a result of the often noted resistance of government administration to delegate responsibilities and power to non-public sector, new regional policies in many democratic countries try to empower their regions through creating a balance between central governing with an emphasis on the redistribution of activities and resources, and local mobilization with an emphasis on self reliance, innovation and learning (Amdam, 2002). This form of “mixed” development policy underlining the role of different levels in public resources management is often considered in political sciences as a concept of multi-level governance (Campbell and Coulson, 2006, Palumbo, 2010).

The conviction about a positive impact of territorial governance, based on quasi non-government organisations gathering representatives of the three main economic sectors (public, private and voluntary one), drove the policy-makers to establish various support programmes facilitating its creation and giving it some amount of public resources to manage. *Community Features* launched in late 1980s in Canada, *LEADER Community Initiative* in the European Union (three phases in 1991-2006), *REGIONEN ACTIV* in Germany, *PRODER* in Spain, *POMO* in Finland and many others (Ray, 2006, Freshwater et al., 1993, Siebert and Dosch, 2005) are examples of such programmes established to encourage the formation of partnerships between local authorities, as well as corporate and the third sector organisations.

Due to the current EU policy regional authorities of the member states are obliged to carry out public consultations on strategic planning, prepare documents compatible with the EU regional policy implementation, and establish regional partnership institutions comprising representatives of social partners, businesses and NGOs, which participate in the process of distribution of the structural funds (Dąbrowski, 2008). In the territorial partnership governance of the LEADER type the non-public actors are not only consultants, but also members of the decision body, in which they should have a minimum of 50% of the votes. They co-decide about the features of local strategies, undertaken actions (chosen projects) and

they also can be the body carrying out some actions (Figure 1). Another difference is the way of intervention area delimitation. The territory of actions is not typically an administrative region, but it is formed in a bottom-up process by voluntary gathering of the smallest self-governing units, e.g. parish councils or districts in the UK, municipalities (gminas) in Poland (Furmankiewicz and Slee, 2007). The area is chosen as a homogeneous region based on a local identity (e.g. cultural features, natural area, economic region etc.).

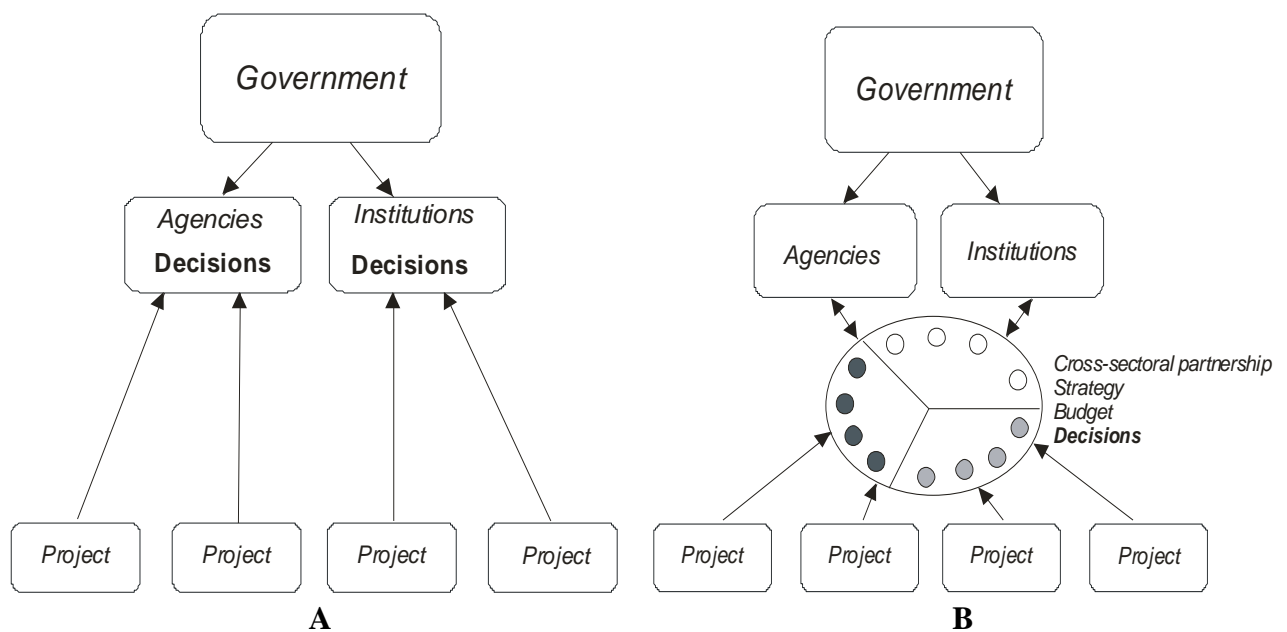


Figure 1. Traditional sectoral policy of supporting local projects (A) and an integrated approach proposed in the LEADER type territorial governance concept (B).

The partnership territorial governance is widely discussed in literature, however, in reality the amount of public funds available for these organisations has been a very small part of all the funds supporting rural development. The financial resources given to partnership organisations should be organised in the form of a small grant competition available for local communities, businesses and public institutions. The aims and actions of the projects should be in accordance with the local strategy prepared in advance by local stakeholders, but they do not need to have sector features. However, in practice in LEADER 4th Axis (2007-2013) they are divided into independent “operation” budget lines: 1) „Village Revival and Development” (typically small infrastructure); 2) “Differentiation towards non-agricultural activity” (for farmers); 3 “Starting and developing a business” (for businesses); and „Small

Projects” (local events and other local actions), thus individual projects are not fully “integrated”.

### ***3. The implementation of territorial governance approach in Poland***

In Poland, the self-governed urban, rural, and urban-rural municipalities were re-created in 1990, but the self-governing regions and the middle level of public administration – powiat (district) were not created until 1998. The first planning measures in the subject of rural development were taken in the early 1990s, and they were a basis for developing agricultural and rural policy prior to the EU accession. The most important pre-accession programme was SAPARD (2002-2004). It imitated the European Union structural programmes and offered the opportunity for beneficiaries and public administration to become acquainted with the procedures required to obtain structural support from the EU budget and to solve some of the most urgent problems of the food economy and rural areas (Wigier, 2006). The programme had typical exogenous features, aiming mainly at the agricultural production sector development, and it did not contain any substitutes of the LEADER type territorial programmes.

In 2004-2006, after the European Union accession, the implementation of the agricultural and rural development policy was based on the National Development Plan (Narodowy Plan Rozwoju – NPR). A detailed scope of support for agriculture and rural areas was determined in the “Rural Development Plan for Poland” (Plan Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich dla Polski – PROW) and in the Sectoral Operational Programme (SOP) - “Restructuring and Modernisation of the Food Sector and Rural Development” (Sektorowy Program Operacyjny “Restrukturyzacja i modernizacja sektora żywnościowego oraz rozwój obszarów wiejskich”). Other development measures, particularly those related to infrastructure, human resources, environmental protection, competitiveness or fisheries, were included in other six operational programmes. The total public (national and EU) resources for NPR were planned at EUR 17,673 million, of which the EU funds represented EUR 12,810 million. The EU resources of EUR 8,276 million were used to co-finance seven Sectoral Operational Programmes, two Community Initiatives (a total of EUR355 million), as well as to finance measures within the framework of the Cohesion Fund (EUR 4,179 million). Furthermore, NPR for 2004- 2006 comprised the so-called voivodship contracts, implemented under the voivodship programmes for regional development and fully financed by national public resources (budget of near EUR 857 million).

The elites in central administration were reluctant to implement the LEADER type territorial governance which moved the competence and responsibilities of managing public funds to quasi non-government organisations (Furmankiewicz et al., 2010). However, as a result of rural development experts' lobby and the perspective of planned LEADER axis, a relatively small sub-programme (measure 2,5) under the Sector Operation Programme 'Restructuring and Modernisation of the Food Sector and Rural Development 2004-2006' was launched. In the first stage of the programme analysed (Scheme I of the LPP, 2004-2006) support was provided for setting up and organizing the LAGs and for preparing their strategies. There were 248 applications submitted, most commonly by local authorities (67%) and voluntary organisations (32%). The applicants were individually responsible for the financial and organisational aspects of the LAG formation and the strategy building. The maximum grant for the LAG formation amounted to PLN 150,000 (c. EUR 37,000). Eventually 167 LAGs and their strategies were supported (budget PLN 19.5 million - c. EUR 5.5 million, as for 2006).

Scheme II of the LPP (2006-2008, final budget of EUR 24.8 million) was launched as an independent competition for all the existing LAGs. As a result, 187 applications were submitted and, eventually, a total of 149 LAGs received grants up to PLN 750,000 (c. EUR 187,500). The projects most commonly focused on improving the quality of life and the development of natural and cultural resources. Hard projects (investments) were not allowed in the programme, only soft actions (promotions, trainings, documents) were possible. Consequently, the engagement of private sector and farmers was low. Local governments and local voluntary organisations were most active in the local coalitions. The main targets of the activity were: promotion and tourist infrastructure development, rural areas restructuring, and local product promotion. Essential idea of the LEADER territorial governance, assumed that independent local grant competition should be launched, was not allowed and the programme was centrally managed. The LAG projects (one application from one LAG) were chosen by the central state agency – FAPA foundation (Figure 2 A).



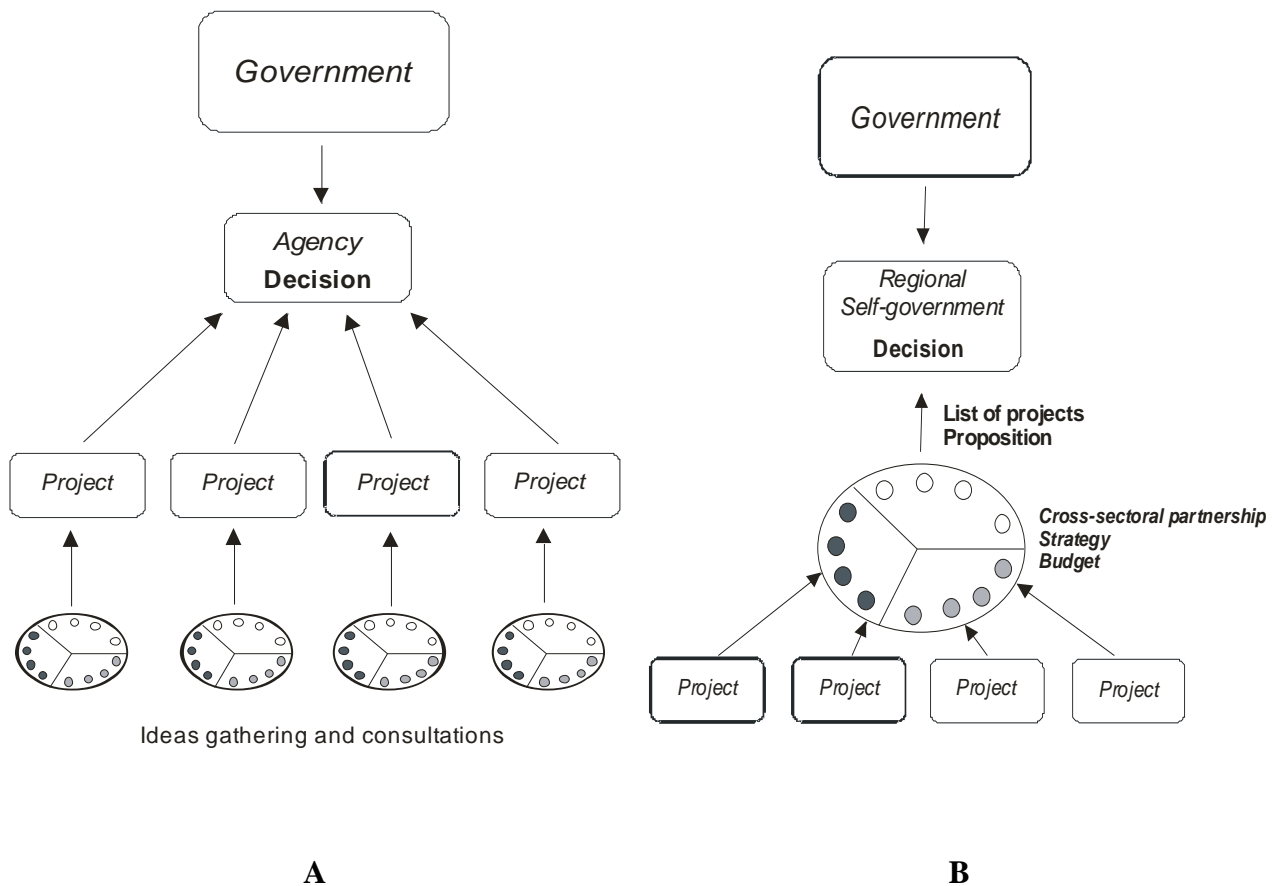


Figure 2. The organisational features of the LEADER Pilot Programme (in practice 2005-march 2008; A) and the LEADER Axis (realised in practice from 2008, B) in Poland. Both are not in full accordance with the LEADER ideas, because the role of central or regional government in local action appraisal is still very high.

In the planning period 2007-2013 the Ministry of Agriculture implement a single, coherent Programme of Rural Areas Development (PROW). The programme comprises of twenty measures grouped into four priority axes, i.e. the improvement of the competitiveness of the agricultural and rural sectors, the improvement of the environment and rural areas, the quality of life in rural areas and the diversification of the rural economy and the LEADER Axis. The budget for the PROW is approximately EUR 15.3 billion, including the EU resources of EUR 11.8 billion (Wigier, 2006). In the LEADER Axis the 338 territorial partnerships were eligible to get support. Small grant competitions for local organisations were allowed, however, high competence for regional authorities was given to check the eligibility criteria and conformity to local strategy, so the full responsibility of the undertaken actions was not moved to LAGs. The LAGs prepared the ranking list of local projects, but the

final decision was taken by regional authority (Figure 2 B). It enabled a strict control over LAG actions and it is the main reason for a long-time process of application approval.

#### ***4. The impact of Local Action Group actions onto social and economic activity in Poland***

*The participation of local communities in the LAG organisations* - According to the data from FAPA, in the meetings connected with the formation of LAGs, there were, on average, 45 persons engaged in each LAG in the years 2004-2006, a total of 6750 people across the country. From 18 to 49% of rural and urban-rural municipalities in different regions in Poland (on average 35%) were covered by the LAG territories and were inhabited by a population of more than 7 million.

According to the formal data, on average, there was a 46% representation of the social sector, 37% of the public sector and 17% of the business sector in LAG management boards. The average number of representatives of formal institutions in LAG management boards was more than 8 (from 5 to 24 representatives). Some authors underline that often the public sector officers were hidden and shown as 'the social sector' representatives in formal reports (Knieć, 2009), but we have no evidence regarding the scope of these practices.

*The realised projects* - The local actions were supported in 149 PPL + LAGs in the years 2007-2008. In the LAGs supported by the PPL+ programme, 91 persons per LAG were engaged in each action, whereas 85 persons per LAG participated in the trainings. But, taking into consideration that each LAG consisted at that time of the area covering about five municipalities, inhabited altogether by approximately 50,000 people, the number of the participants is in fact low.

The most of the measures were issued in terms of "training" and "promotion of regional and cultural events" in which residents could be engaged, at least, as recipients of these services. However, individual projects in some cases were lacking the active participation of residents, particularly in the "expertise" budget line. The examples of such projects can be seen in the technical documentation of the infrastructure modernization, prepared in some LAGs. Additionally, the technical plans in the created documents could not be implemented in practice because the PPL + did not support infrastructure (hard) projects and investments. Undoubtedly, the preparation of the technical documentation by experts had no significant impact on the activity of the inhabitants; however, they could improve the "quality of life" in the future, if they were implemented in practice. Often, the documentation concerned typical

governmental tasks which additionally, in some cases, were imposed by local authorities as a condition to support LAG actions.

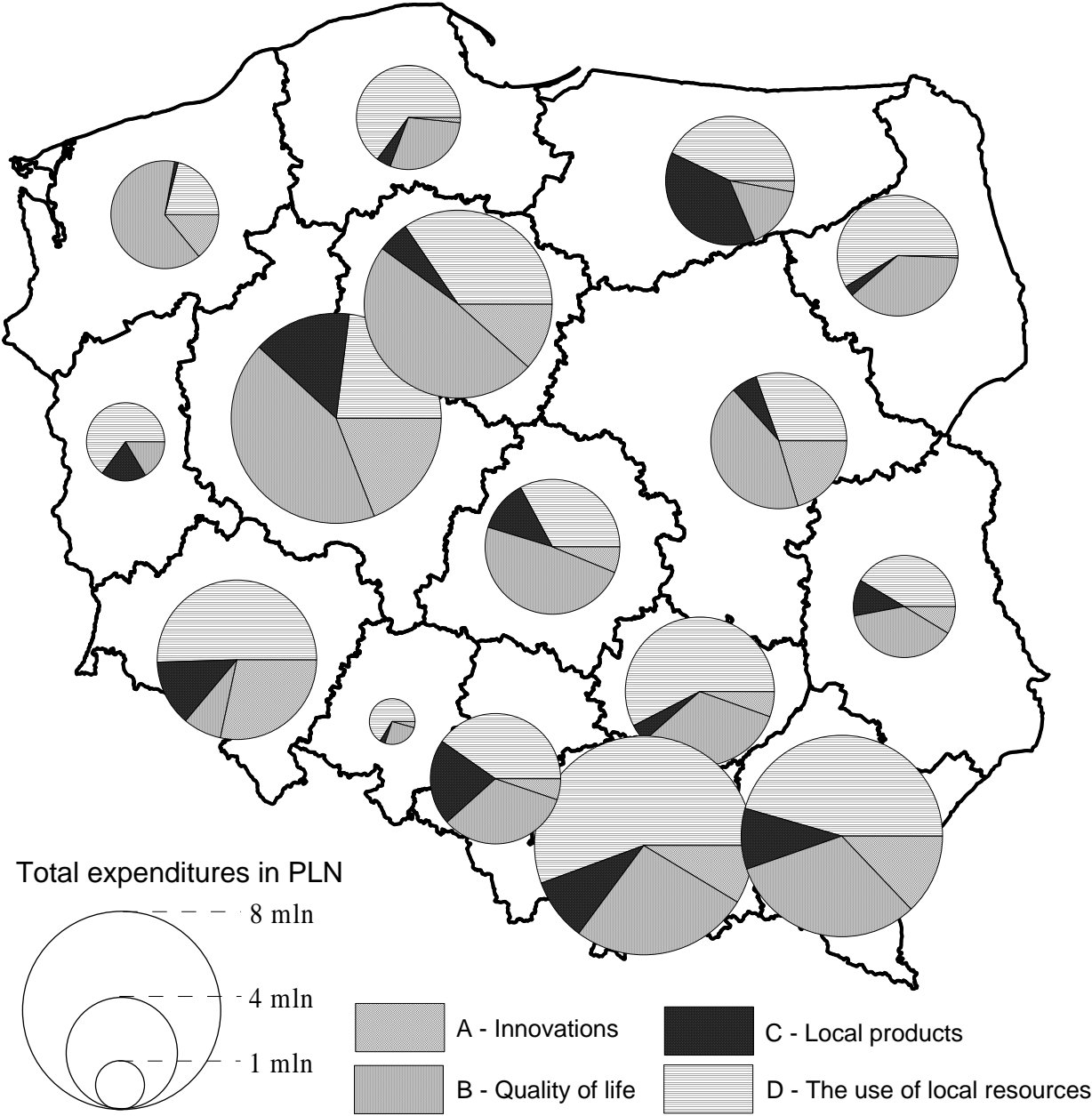


Figure 3. The total amount and structure of expenses for local actions realised in LAGs in Scheme II, Polish LEADER+ Pilot Programme (2006-march 2008), per region.

*The impact of the actions onto social and economic activity* – In order to determine some effects of the territorial rural development policy, all municipalities that met the criteria for participation in the PPL+ were divided into two groups (the municipalities that could not participate in this program were omitted): 1) those whose actions were supported by the PPL+ (within the so-called Scheme II) and 2) those which were not supported by the programme regardless of the municipality being or not being a member of a not-supported LAG). Average

values of the indicators which characterised both groups of municipalities were compared according to the data from 2003 and 2007, which roughly illustrated the state before the implementation of programme and at the end of the process (statistical data is only available for the selected years). Figure 4 presents the initial difference between the indicators in 2003 and the value of change (plus and minus indicating a positive and negative change respectively). Three main indicators for measuring the social activity were used: 1) the number of registered foundations and associations (NGOs) per 10,000 inhabitants; 2) artistic ensembles members in public cultural centres per 10,000 inhabitants 3) club members in public cultural centres per 10,000 inhabitants.

In the majority of regions in Poland the number of NGOs was bigger in municipalities which gained the support from the LEADER programme, just before the LEADER programme beginning. This confirms that LAGs were organised in the regions where the local communities were more active than in other rural areas. However, the increase in the number of NGOs was greater in supported municipalities in 11 out of 16 regions (Figure 4), so the programme had a positive impact on new organisation formation. Data concerning the activity in public cultural centres is quite problematic as it was observed that in municipalities with LAGs this kind of activity decreased in many of the regions in Poland (Figure 5). Yet, in our opinion, it is not a negative impact of the LEADER programme, but a result of a growing role of NGOs in event and action organisation, which is not noted in the official statistical data containing only the activity of public centres. However, this process proved a limited role of 'added value' creation by the LEADER Pilot Programme when the role of public institution in local communities' activation decreased. The biggest improvement of the situation in LAG's area took place in the regions which in 2003 were characterized by small disparities between the two types of areas analyzed.

In terms of economic activity, the positive impact of this programme was evident in the creation and registration of so-called local products, however, we have data from one region only (Lower Silesia). The local products promotion was one of the most important objectives of LAGs, and it is clear that in the municipalities with LAGs the number of registered products is significantly higher than in not supported municipalities. The support in the form of marketing and promotion to increase farmers' and local producers' sales of products can, thus, have a positive impact on their incomes, because the individual income from direct sales could be higher than from bulk buying.

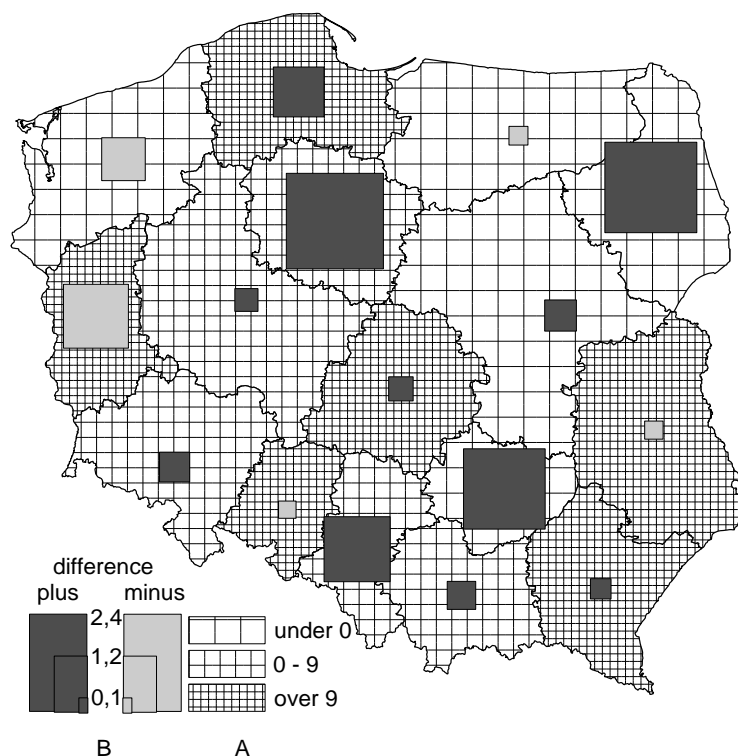


Figure 4. Initial differences (A - surface graph) and changes in the number of NGOs (B - square graph) on area of supported Local Actions Groups, comparing to not supported one, per region.

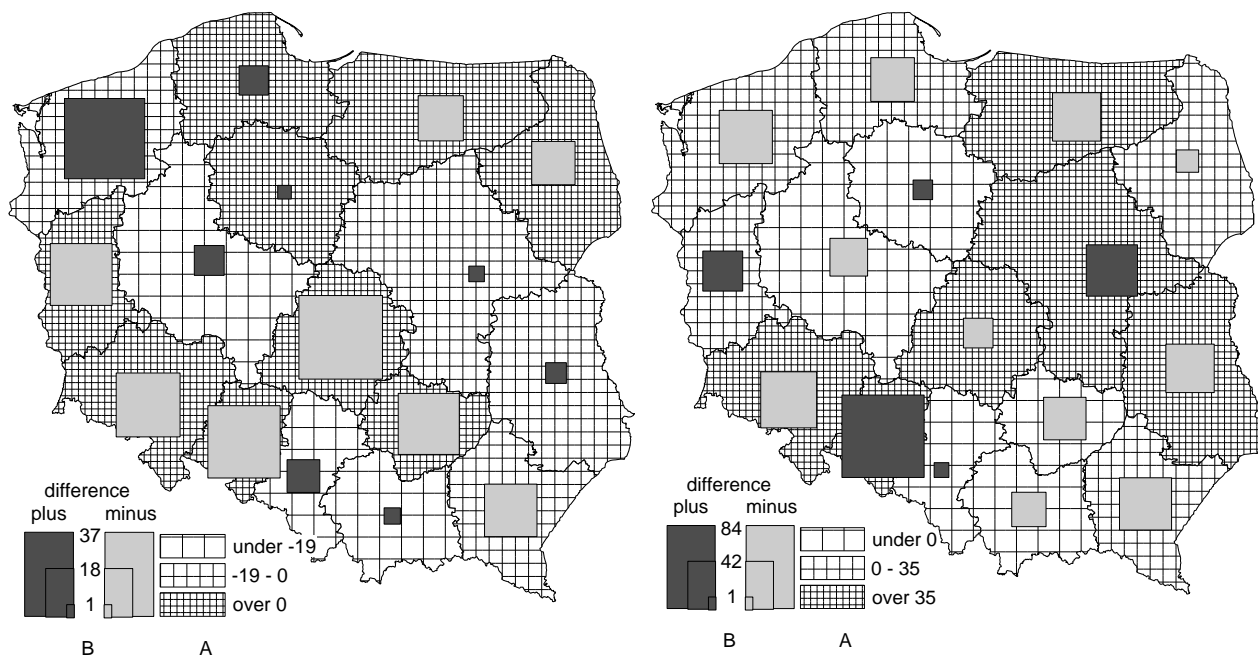


Figure 5. The initial differences (A - surface graph) and changes (B - square graph) in the number of artistic ensemble members per 10000 inhabitants (left) and local clubs members per 10000 inhabitants (right) in area of supported Local Actions Groups, compared to non supported ones.

In the case of economic measures there were no significant positive changes in their values and LAG activities did not bring positive economic effects visible in statistics (i.e. the number of business companies and individual incomes). This is not surprising, however, given the short duration of the programme. It should be noted that the increase in economic activity and the growth of inhabitants' wealth is, to a greater extent, influenced by factors not related to the actions to animate grassroots activities in the area. The analysis of the base year 2003 shows, that in the municipalities with LAGs the economic indexes were worse than in municipalities without LAGs and the period 2003-2007 saw, in most of the cases, the increase of these negative differences.

### ***5. Conclusions***

In the new territorial policy, the sub-regions (not administrative regions) created in a bottom-up manner become a new modality of power, contest and participation. While the territorial governance concept in Europe is more developed and mature, and new development policy structures evolve into more decentralized and less top-dominated, Poland follows that policy in a very slow and constrained way. The central government is continuously reluctant to fully transfer responsibilities to Local Action Groups, although the local partnerships have access only to relatively small amount of the EU structural funds. The institutional feature of the LEADER Pilot Programme and the LEADER Axis was unnecessarily and almost exclusively focused on the absorption of the European Union funds, with a smaller attention paid to main ideas of these programmes such as social inclusion or engagement of the non-public sector in public resources management. This orientation was also typical for former programmes utilising the European Union funds in Poland (Grosse, 2006). Similarly Dąbrowski (2008), while analysing the structural funds management by regional authorities, found a strong organisation bureaucratic pedantry of the officials in charge of financial control and transfers, connected also with mutual distrust between civil servants and citizens or the voluntary sector. A generalised belief in the possibility of corruptions in money spending resulted in insistence on control procedures which went much further than the Commission's recommendations. We observed these features also in the implementation of the LEADER Pilot Programme (no possibility to create local small grant competition) and the LEADER Axis (the final decision about the list of co-financed projects is made by regional authorities, not by LAGs' decision body). The government's unwillingness to strengthen the

competences of local partnerships and a high level of administrative procedures decrease the effectiveness of territorial governance-like policy.

Despite the constrained features of territorial governance in Poland, the LEADER Pilot Programme had a visible positive impact on the voluntary organisation creation, however, LAG events were not "added" to those already existing, because when LAGs (formally registered as voluntary organisation) took over the organization and financing of local activities, the role of public cultural centres decreased. On the other hand, such a transfer of responsibility for organizing various activities, from local self-government departments to local NGOs, also shows an increase in the role of the third sector in meeting the local needs, which can be regarded as a positive aspect of the LEADER programme. However, due to the lack of data on the number of events and total number of team members in municipalities, it is difficult to verify this interpretation.

The voluntary sector in rural areas is weak, and the most popular are Voluntary Fire Brigades (Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna) and the Farmer's Wives' Circles (so far the most commonly not registered as legal units). Young and small formal organisations can be characterized by a poor financial status, low budgets and the lack of any financial reserves or properties. Consequently, they have significant financial and organisational difficulties to engage into the European Union funds utilization, when one has to make a contribution or needs resources for the project financing which can be later refunded. It is a general feature of the third sector in Poland (Churski, 2008), but it is absolutely essential in rural areas. Additionally, local voluntary organisations typically have no employed staff so the members work voluntarily after their full-time job. As a result, public institutions (public community and welfare centres, schools) are more predisposed to win support for local actions due to their experience and stable staff taking actions in their working hours.

Two main features, i.e. the weakness of the voluntary sector and the incessant government or self-government inclinations to control decisions about the European funds support, are commonly underlined in literature, and even question the utility of partnerships as a tool for stimulating the participation of the non-public sector in the regional (thus territorial) development policy delivery in Poland as well as other member states sharing similar institutional legacy of the communist system (Dąbrowski, 2008). We agree with the view that there is a difficulty to organise balanced partnership structures with a significant engagement and the power of voluntary sector in the decision making and the EU funds spending processes, but even in the state organisation structures dominated by the public sector we found a positive impact of the LEADER type partnerships on the voluntary sector

development. However, they continuously need a special support to manage administrative and financial affairs in the structural fund utilization. Only the strong voluntary organisations with stable administrative staff members can engage in the partnership management and cope with the formal requirements of the structural funds. Even if many Local Action Groups in Poland are dominated by the public sector, the role of the voluntary sector and the business sector in public resource management increases when they are not only the consultants, but they have a real possibility to vote to chose local projects in LAGs' decision bodies. The further process of territorial governance implementation needs not only a greater amount of money, but it also needs to limit the role of the government officials in LAGs' decision bodies to balance the power relations and to built the capacity of local voluntary organisations to enable them to realise projects supported by different public funds.

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