

## **APPLICATION OF THE MODEL OF INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES LOCATED IN NATURAL VALUABLE AREAS OF THE LUBLIN VOIVODESHIP<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract.** The overall aim of this study was to determine the feasibility and benefits of the implementation of the integrated model of sustainable development in communes located in the environmentally valuable areas of the Lublin voivodeship (Poland). The study area consisted of 30 communes with the highest environmental values in the Lublin voivodeship, as selected for the study based on the value of the indicator developed by D. Guzal-Dec in the study of the ecological values of rural and semi-urban areas of the Lublin voivodeship.

Diagnostic survey used a questionnaire interview. Interviews were completed in 2013. The research material comprised 30 questionnaires, interviews were conducted with the mayor and employees involved in environmental issues in municipal offices. Websites of the surveyed communes and Local Action Groups (LAGs) of the surveyed communes were also important sources of information.

In the light of the analysis, the integrated model of sustainable development was considered in creating the optimal development of communes located within environmentally valuable areas. It has been shown that local authorities aiming at the implementation an integration of the model of sustainable development are characterized by a higher level of environmental competitiveness. It was pointed out that the implementation of this model suffers such difficulties as shortage of social capital. The implementation of the integrated model of sustainable development also requires changes in attitudes and openness of local authorities towards the widely implemented strategy of intersectoral cooperation. The surveyed governments have taken action to the creation of the integrated model, e.g. widespread participation in LAGs, the first experience in cross-sectoral cooperation outside the LAG in clusters, the implementation of the model is, thus, in the early stages.

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## **Introduction**

The paper takes up an extremely important and topical research issue of determining social determinants of local development processes within natural valuable areas exhibiting relatively low level of socio-economic development. This paper is in the mainstream of socio-ecological economic research (socio-ecological economics). Socio-ecological economics attaches great importance to social knowledge, shaped by the participation and performance in teams. Knowledge and social participation play an important role in the development, approval and implementation of the sustainable development strategy (Jezewski P., 2007).

The overall aim of this study was to determine the feasibility and benefits of the implementation of the integrated model of sustainable development in the communes located within the environmentally valuable areas of the Lublin voivodeship (Poland). The specific objectives are:

- indication of the conditions for the implementation of the integrated model of sustainable development;
- proposing tools for the identification of sustainable development models implemented in communes located within environmentally valuable areas;
- identification of the possibility of implementation of the integrated model of sustainable development in communes located in the environmentally valuable areas of the Lublin voivodeship;
- identification of the activities of local authorities in the implementation of integrated sustainable development;
- determination of the relationship between the type of the implemented sustainable development model (model aimed at integrating) and the level of environmental competitiveness of the surveyed communes.

The following hypothesis has been set up:

Local governments seeking to implement an integrated model of sustainable development are characterized by a higher level of environmental competitiveness.

The study area consisted of 30 communes with the highest environmental values in the Lublin voivodeship selected for the study, as based on the value of the indicator developed by D. Guzal-Dec in the study of ecologically valuable rural and semi-urban areas of the Lublin voivodeship. The procedure is described in detail in (Guzal-Dec D., 2013). The method of diagnostic survey used a questionnaire interview. Interviews were completed in 2013. The research material comprised 30 questionnaires, an interview with the mayor and employees involved in environmental issues in municipal offices. Websites of the surveyed communes and LGDs within the surveyed communes were also important sources of information. The report

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## **Research results and discussion**

### **Integrated sustainable development - conditions for the implementation of the concept in communes located in environmentally valuable areas**

Commune of natural value the constructive element of which are protected areas with a high protection regime, limiting the opportunities for economic development, in spite of many internal differences, combine low level of socio-economic development. The location of natural valuable communes in the area of the peripheral region of Eastern Poland, in the Lublin voivodeship, also determines the development impediments - dynamics of positive change and development lower than in other parts of the country. In this situation, the problem of searching for factors that could boost growth processes becomes of major importance. The newest and most popular concepts of local and regional development emphasize internal - endogenous growth factors. It is emphasized that the development of territorial units is decided by internal resources, and in particular their ability to mobilize and be effectively used. The role of the main initiator and coordinator of such processes is attributed primarily to local authorities - at the local level, the municipal self-government (Plawgo B., 2010).

The demands of the integrated management, combining interventions in various sectors and at different levels of administration, were already articulated during the creation of the European Cohesion Policy. This policy, due to its horizontal nature, is a natural carrier of such an approach. The so-called new paradigm of development management gives more powers to local governments. The process of building an integrated system opens up the public sphere to define policy in consultation and interaction with other actors of the development game (Grosse T.G., Galek A., 2008). In the construction of effective cooperation between business, science, government and non-governmental organizations, local government is particularly important. It should function as a catalyst, and thus, acquire representatives of business and scientific communities to support selected areas of promising opportunities to gain competitive advantage and to find niches in which the region can become a leader (Slodowa-Helpa M., 2012).

In view of the well-known problems of communes related to meeting the basic needs of residents local governments face the dangers of the often badly directed (not social) development and the lack of awareness of the need for competition policy and determining the sources of competitive advantage (Slodowa-Helpa M., 2013). Undoubtedly, a new quality is that, instead of competitive strategies, local government units are beginning to recognize the importance of local government and the role of co-operation. According to J. Wozniak, this new quality should be nurtured (Wozniak J., 2012). Local governments frequently take up traditional formal intra forms of collaboration and cooperation in the system: administration –

business – science – NGOs, integrating formative development, is unfortunately insufficient, particularly in the eastern Poland (Czyz P. et al., 2013).

An integrated approach involving all interested entities can significantly increase the ability of the region to reap sustainable benefits from its natural and cultural heritage. However, it is especially important to take into account both the environmental and social elements in the process of economic development. Implementation of projects strengthening local identity and self-esteem is indicated, e.g. the development of regional and local products, combining local sectors previously clearly separated, such as agriculture and tourism, commercialization of cultural and natural resources, the use of local skills, new applications of information and communication technologies (Slodowa-Helpa M., 2013).

The concept of integrated sustainable development can be implemented only in integrated and multi-entity rationally organized systems. The ability of individual actors to construct horizontal and vertical integration is, thus, an important feature to build competitive advantage. With this type of cooperation there appear territorial economies of scale, and the integrated approach, involving all interested parties, may increase the ability of the region to reap the sustainable benefits of natural heritage (Slodowa-Helpa M., 2009).

A. Kasztelan emphasizes that regions with a relatively clean environment should aim to focus on the development strategy of economic activities which more or less use the resources and values of the environment. Achieving competitive advantage over other regions, based on the existing environmental potential, the ability of its use in the process of socio-economic development and low levels of human impact can be described by the same author as the environmental competitiveness of the region (Kasztelan A., 2010). A Sztando defines competitive environment as the ability to offer residents, visitors and guests attractive, intact natural values of human activities (Sztando A., 1999).

It seems, thus, that an integrated approach to managing the development is the optimal formula for implementing sustainable development in communes located in environmentally valuable areas, generally characterized by relatively lower level of economic development and, thus, appropriate synergy of human capital and natural is necessary. The prerequisite for the implementation of the concept are such advantages as the ability to mobilize and effectively use the human factor, the development of social capital, increasing the degree of the rational (economic and environmental) use of natural capital, and eventually improving the environmental competitiveness.

### **Sustainable development models implemented in the surveyed communes**

The concept of sustainable development, in contrast to the paradigm of globalization, highlights the subjectivity of the local community (Lawrence G., 2005, Ray Ch., 2006). Sustainable development should be based on endogenous or neoendogenous (Ray Ch., 2006) mechanisms of development the essence of which is "the participation of the interested parties

in the formulation and application of a development strategy in partnership with other social actors", both local and external (Gorlach K., Adamski T., 2006).

Social actors use different types of knowledge, based on different assumptions about the social reality, social order and everyday life (Klekotko M., 2008). Three basic types of it may be mentioned: expert - scientific, managerial and local knowledge – local lay knowledge. Local knowledge is derived from long-term experience of the community and is perpetuated by local traditions, practices and customs. In the case of the neoendogenous development it is appropriate for all types of knowledge to be the basis for constructing a change strategy (Adamski T., 2008). Launching the neoendogenous development mechanism is allowed by local knowledge, especially when it is in relation to the global scientific knowledge (Bicker A., Sillotoe P., Pottier J., 2004).

It is generally accepted that there is a close relationship between the local civil society and sustainable development of the community (Goodland R., 1995; Lawrence G., 2005). Civil society, despite the growing interest in both the academic and political environment, still faces a kind of terminological confusion and lack of consensus on a common definition (Carbone M., 2008). It is most often defined in terms of active citizenship and civic participation. Civil society is treated as one of the dimensions of sustainable development, its purpose and measure but also a facilitator of the implementation of the sustainable development strategy (Klekotko M., 2008).

The following four types of rural civil communities can be determined (Klekotko M., 2008): minimal community - inactive in the public sphere, informal and locally-oriented community – exhibits strong horizontal bonds, institutional community - formalized network of relationships, ideal community - residents exhibit activity in the community, both informally and in institutionalized forms.

Different types of rural civil societies create conditions for the implementation of various models of sustainable development (Klekotko M., 2008).

Table 1

**Models of sustainable development of communes**

Model	Actors and types of knowledge			
	Self-government	NGOs	residents	external experts
	managerial knowledge	Expert knowledge	local Knowledge	Expertise/scientific knowledge
Agency model	+	-	-	+/-
Model of alliances	+	+	-	+/-
Bottom-up model	+	-	+	-/+
Integrated model	+	+	+	+

**Source: Klekotko M., 2008, 28;** Explanation of the typology criteria requirements to be met: (+) necessary (+/-) desired, but not necessary (- / +) unnecessary but advisable (-) unnecessary

The minimal civic community creates conditions for the agency model. The agency model is characterized by the choice of the local government by people, and entrusting the interests of

the community to it. Local government decisions on directions of change are independent but usually take place with the use of expert knowledge. In the model alliances, local governments cooperate with NGOs (i.e. "modern" - deeply involved in the development of communes), basing on the expert and managerial knowledge. The bottom-up model is based on the cooperation of local government using the ideas growing out of local knowledge, thus, it plays a major role. The integrated model is characterized by the participation of various groups making up the community and cooperating with it (local government, NGOs, local people) in decision-making regarding the future direction of the commune and the integration of all types of knowledge.

A number of conditions were assumed for a relatively unambiguous assignment when attempting to identify the models of sustainable development present in the surveyed communes of the Lublin voivodeship. The agency model assumes that local power is the main subject of the creation of a local development strategy – socialization of the strategy development process can take place after its publication. Decisiveness of local authorities will strengthen their overrepresentation (larger than 1/3 share) in the structures of the Councils of LAGs. The development of competence in implementing the environmental and development policy enables the organization of work of councillors, as reflected in the creation of problem groups - standing committees for the Municipal Council on environmental / economic issues / development of the selected function.

Institutional civic community creates the conditions for the model of alliances. Participation of NGOs in the development of the development strategy is recommended in this model. The "modern" NGOs (taking up comprehensive pro-development activities for the local community as opposed to the "traditional" NGOs in rural areas, such as: voluntary fire brigades, rural housewives' meetings - operating in selected areas of development). In this model, municipal governments should create the conditions for a debate with NGOs and cooperate in the field of ecology with ecological organizations.

Informal civic community creates the conditions for the bottom-up model. In the bottom-up model commune inhabitants should be co-authors of the commune's development strategy, the structure of LAG councils should exist with apparent dominance of the social sector. It is advisable for the government to work with residents in the field of ecology.

Ideal civic community creates ideal conditions for the integrated model. In this model, the authors of the commune's development strategy should be all of the representatives of the local community and external experts. The structure of LAG councils should represent an equivalent participation of sectors in deciding on the development of communes. It is a long-standing experience in cross-sectoral cooperation of local governments (including outside of LGDs) and constant cooperation with such research centres as business clusters. There should be conditions created to debate with NGOs, representing LAG councils in a number of issues. In order to increase the own potential of knowledge, local governments should properly organize the work of the Municipal Councils (creating permanent committees on environmental

/ economic development / selected function / direction of development). In the implementation of environmental actions, municipal governments should work both with the locals and ecological organizations, so that the cumulative effect of the knowledge of the local community took place.

Table 2

**Scheme of sustainable model types determination in the communes located in environmentally valuable areas**

<b>model type</b> <b>classification criteria</b>	<b>agency</b>	<b>alliances</b>	<b>bottom-up</b>	<b>integrated</b>
Share of residents in the creation of development strategies	-	-	+	+
Participation of local authorities in creating development strategies	+	+	+	+
Participation of external experts in the creation of a development strategy	+/-	+/-	-/+	+
Participation of NGOs in the creation of a development strategy	-	+	-	+
The occurrence of the standing committees of the Municipal Council for environmental / economic selected development function	+	-/+	+/-	+
LAG council structure	50% self-government participation allowed	Participation of "modern" NGOs	Social sector domination	Sector balance
Participation of NGOs in the structures of LAG council	-	-	-	+
Creating conditions for a debate with NGOs	-	+	-	+
Cooperation in the field of ecology with ecological organizations	-	+	-	+
Cooperation in the field of ecology with residents	-	-	-/+	+
Continuous co-operation of local government / community with academic institutions e.g. within a cluster	+/-	+/-	-/+	-/+
Experience in cross-sectoral cooperation outside the LGD	-	-	-	-/+

**Source: author's construction based on the research;** Explanation of the typology criteria requirements to be met: (+) necessary (+/-) desired, but not necessary (- / +) unnecessary but advisable (-) unnecessary

Most difficulties in describing the models found in the surveyed communes have been connected with the differentiation between the agency and the bottom-up models. Therefore, the following distinguishing criteria have been adopted for the models:

- LGD council structure (with the bottom-up model, the dominance of the social sector, and with the agency model, 50% of the public sector);
- cooperation of residents in environmental efforts (advised in the bottom-up model);
- participation of the residents in the creation of a development strategy (in the bottom-up model contribution of the residents in the development of the document is necessary).

The bottom-up model was the one most widespread within the surveyed communes - a total of 16 indications and in the case of the agency model - a total of 13 indications. A model of alliances has been identified in the case of one commune. In the case of 10 communes, the model implemented has evolved into the integrated model, of which in six that was the bottom-up model towards an integrated one, in three towards the agency model and in one, it was the model of alliances towards the integrated one).

If at least 6 out of the 11 criteria for the identification of the integrated model type were met, it was considered that the present model tended to evolve towards an integrated model. None of the surveyed communes showed participation of NGOs in the creation of the development strategy of the commune, or cooperation with ecological organizations in the field of ecology. Occasionally, cooperation was taken up in clusters, and conditions were created for a debate with NGOs. In the surveyed rural communes an integrated model of sustainable development has not been fully developed, which demonstrates the essence of dim awareness of sustainable management of commune society<sup>1</sup>. It must therefore be emphasized that the implementation of the concept of sustainable development of environmentally valuable communes in the environmental dimension requires changing attitudes towards environmental problems of local governments to support the creation of an integrated sustainable development.

Preference for the bottom-up and agency models demonstrates that local government authorities insufficiently platform the development of synergies of different types of social knowledge. Development barrier is the low level of social capital - as indicated by the popularity of the agency model, which is characterized by minimal civic community. The universality of the bottom-up model translates into great opportunities to use local knowledge, but without linking it to the global - expert - knowledge.

### **The model of the integrated sustainable development and environmental competitiveness of the surveyed communes**

In search of the determinants of the success of the communes in achieving competitive advantages in the environmental area, it is important to show the relationship between the level of environmental competitiveness and the model of sustainable development implemented by the communes. Due to the difficulty of measuring environmental competitiveness (operationalization of the concept and availability of data) the measurement accounts for the narrow concept of environmental competitiveness understood as the ability to attract tourists. The level of the environmental competitiveness measured using the ability to attract tourists (the adopted measure - the number using the accommodation as of 31 December 2013) proved to be statistically determined by the model of sustainable development implemented by local governments.

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<sup>1</sup> Similarly, paper on the CORASON project, based on rural communes in Lodzkie and Malopolskie voivodeships, also did not reveal the emergence of an integrated model, cf. M. Klekotko 2008.



**The level of environmental competitiveness vs. the type of the implemented sustainable development model**

<b>Competitiveness level</b> <b>model type</b>	<b>below the arithmetic mean</b>	<b>above the arithmetic mean</b>
aimed at integrating (integrated)	16.67%	83.33%
Other	91.67%	8.33%

**Source: author's calculations based on the research**

Communes characterized by above-average levels of environmental competitiveness have often implemented models aimed at integrating (Pearson Chi-Square test is 15.09,  $df = 1$ , at the significance level of  $p = 0.0001$ ). The results obtained allow for the acceptance of the hypothesis set up in the paper, as the governments' efforts to implement an integrated model of sustainable development are characterized by a higher level of environmental competitiveness.

## **Conclusions, proposals, recommendations**

1. An integrated model of sustainable development should be considered optimal in the creating of development of communes located in environmentally valuable areas.
2. It has been shown that local efforts to implement an integrated model of sustainable development are characterized by a higher level of environmental competitiveness.
3. The implementation of this model finds such difficulties as shortage of social capital, which is evident in the preference for the agency model applicable to the low level of social activity.
4. The implementation of the integrated model of sustainable development also requires changes in attitudes and openness of local authorities to widely implemented inter-sectoral cooperation strategies.
5. The surveyed local governments have taken action to create an integrated model, for example, widespread participation in LAGs, the first experience in cross-sectoral cooperation outside LAGs, e.g. in clusters, thus, the execution of the model in at its early stages.
6. Further involvement of local communities in the current financial perspective within the framework of LEADER is advised in order to strengthen local social capital, along with taking up cooperation with LAGs from other regions in the country and abroad for the transfer of positive role models and good practices.
7. Activation of municipal institutions of culture and education in the implementation of projects that integrate social knowledge (local and expert) is aimed at strengthening social capital.
8. Application of specific solutions for enhanced social capital in the surveyed communes requires deeper research in order to identify the problems of development in the various communes.

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