PRACE NAUKOWE
Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu

RESEARCH PAPERS
of Wrocław University of Economics

Nr 431

Local and Regional Economy in Theory and Practice

Publishing House of Wrocław University of Economics
Wrocław 2016

Copy-editing: Rafał Galos
Layout: Barbara Łopusiewicz
Proof-reading: Barbara Łopusiewicz
Typesetting: Małgorzata Czupryńska
Cover design: Beata Dębska

Information on submitting and reviewing papers is available on websites
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Wrocław 2016

ISSN 1899-3192
e-ISSN 2392-0041

ISBN 978-83-7695-586-5

The original version: printed

Publication may be ordered in Publishing House
Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu
ul. Komandorska 118/120, 53-345 Wrocław
tel./fax 71 36-80-602; e-mail: econbook@ue.wroc.pl
www.ksiegarnia.ue.wroc.pl

Printing: TOTEM

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Introduction

The Department of Regional Economy at the Faculty of Economics, Management and Tourism of Wrocław University of Economics organized yet another scientific conference entitled: "Local and regional economy in theory and practice". It was already the 23rd conference held on 23-25th September 2015 in "Chata za wsią" hotel in Mysłakowice near Jelenia Góra.

The conference was attended by the representatives of national and international scientific circles, regional and local government structures, and also other entities representing business practice and interested in the problems of local and regional economy, as well as PhD students. Over 80 participants of the conference arrived from over 30 national and foreign scientific centres and institutions to present papers and posters.

The subject matter of the conference covered the following areas: local and regional development, local and regional governance, application of quantitative methods in regional studies, partnership in local and regional development, directions of research in local and regional development, cooperation between academic centres and local government units.

The conference contributed to establishing more extensive and stronger relationships, created within the framework of the constructed platform for the exchange of scientific and practical experiences (the conference has been held cyclically since 1992) at the local, regional, national and international forum. The discussions were focused on the dissemination of research results, the exchange of experiences and the establishment of a discussion forum covering both theoretical and practical aspects of local and regional development. They also resulted in more extensive cooperation between academic centres, local government units as well as research and development centres, including the cross-border ones.

The conference is cyclically attended by the representatives of science from Poland and abroad. So far we have hosted e.g. the research workers representing academic centres from Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Slovakia and also the representatives of business practice, e.g. city presidents and mayors, village heads, county governors, presidents of regional development agencies or of local enterprises, etc.

As a result of the organized conference, the hereby publication presents the collection of thematically selected articles in English covering the broadly understood problems of local and regional economy. Its authors represent the following scientific centres: Warsaw School of Economics, University of Łódź, Gdańsk University of Technology, Koszalin University of Technology, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn and Wrocław University of Economics.

We are most grateful to the conference participants for the joint meeting and we do hope for further cooperation.

Elżbieta Sobczak, Andrzej Raszkowski, Andrzej Sztando

PRACE NAUKOWE UNIWERSYTETU EKONOMICZNEGO WE WROCŁAWIU
RESEARCH PAPERS OF WROCŁAW UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS nr 431 • 2016

Local and Regional Economy in Theory and Practice ISSN 1899-3192
e-ISSN 2392-0041

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BARRIERS IN STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN POLAND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY

BARIERY ZARZĄDZANIA STRATEGICZNEGO ROZWOJEM LOKALNYM W POLSCE NA POCZĄTKU XXI WIEKU

DOI: 10.15611/pn.2016.431.03
JEL Classification: H70, H79, H83, O10, O20, O21, R58

Summary: The article discusses barriers in strategic governance of local development characteristic for Polish local governments, i.e. municipalities, which occurred within the first 15 years of the XXI century. These barriers were identified in the period 2000-2015 by means of using the qualitative field research method, in the process of research and implementation as well as research and development projects' execution, directly and indirectly related to the conceptualization, application and assessment of development strategies for Polish municipalities. The introduction to the article presents the reasons, origins, purpose, method, techniques and the course of conducted research. Next the concept of local development perceived from two perspectives, a local and supra-local one, as well as their governance concept and strategic approach to such governance, are discussed. The core part of the article is devoted to presenting the identified barriers in strategic governance of local development and also their sources. The article is concluded by providing recommendations regarding the continuation of research covering these barriers and the instruments of their reduction.

Keywords: local development, public governance, strategic governance, strategic governance of local development, municipality, Poland.

Streszczenie: Artykuł prezentuje bariery zarządzania strategicznego rozwojem lokalnym charakterystyczne dla polskich samorządów lokalnych, czyli gmin, występujące w nich w pierwszych 15 latach XXI wieku. Bariery te zostały zidentyfikowane metodą jakościowych badań terenowych, prowadzonych w latach 2000-2015, podczas realizacji projektów badawczo-wdrożeniowych i naukowo-badawczych związanych z konceptualizacją, aplikacją i ewaluacją strategii rozwoju polskich gmin. We wstępnej części artykułu zaprezentowano przesłanki, genezę, cel, metodę, techniki i przebieg badań. Następnie omówiono pojęcie rozwoju lokalnego, postrzeganego w dwóch perspektywach: lokalnej i ponadlokalnej, a także pojęcia zarządzania nim i strategicznego podejścia do tego zarządzania. Główną część arty-

kułu poświęcono prezentacji zidentyfikowanych barier. Artykuł kończą zalecenia w zakresie kontynuacji badań nad tymi barierami i instrumentami ich redukcji.

Słowa kluczowe: rozwój lokalny, zarządzanie publiczne, zarządzanie strategiczne, zarządzanie strategiczne rozwojem lokalnym, gmina, Polska.

1. Introduction

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, apart from the state government also territorial self-governments participate in the execution of public authority [Constitution… 1997, Art. 16, item 2]. It consists of self-government units: 16 voivodeships (regional government), 314 counties (sub-regional government) and also 2478 municipalities (local government), out of which 66 additionally exercise county tasks (as of 1st January 2015). They carry out numerous obligatory public tasks, i.e. the statutory ones assigned to them, as well as the optional ones, i.e. not reserved for other authorities. Therefore their importance in Polish economic growth and its socio-economic development is significant and presents the increasing tendency. The continued GDP growth in Poland since 1992, in spite of the European and global crisis, remains, to a great extent, the result of such activities.

Due to the above-mentioned characteristics public governance, executed by the authorities of Polish local government units, is the subject of numerous national and international research projects. Complex approach to such governance, represented by strategic governance, also remains within the area of research interest. It appeared in Polish local governments soon after their transformational reactivation[1] in 1990, and today the majority of them are familiar with, at least, its basic ideas.

In Poland the application of municipal strategic governance was subject to many analyses, foresights and guidelines. Among the noteworthy examples the studies by the following authors can be listed: J. Biniecki, J. Bober, R. Brol, H. Gawroński, M. Goleń, K. Heffner, A. Jewtuchowicz, A. Klasik, W. Kłosowski, J. Kot, J. Koziński, F. Kuźnik, E. Nowińska, A. Noworól, A. Sekuła, J. Sołtys, P. Swianiewicz, B. Szczupak, A. Szlaska, J. Warda, A.P. Wiatrak, L. Wojtasiewicz, E. Wysocka, M. Ziółkowski[2]. They constitute a part of an international trend in publications, covering the problems of strategic governance carried out by local governments, represented by the studies of such authors as: R. Backoff, N. Ben--Elia, J. Carr-West, I. Caulfield, K.L. Choo, Ch. Collinge, R. Crew, G. Daley,

[1] It refers to the transformation of Polish socio-economic system from the socialist to democratic and market one, which was initiated in 1989.

[2] E.g.: [Biniecki, Szczupak 2004; Bober 2006; Brol 2013; Domański 2000; Gawroński 2010; Heffner 2008; Jewtuchowicz 1995; Klasik, Kuźnik 1998; Kłosowski, Warda 2001; Kot 2001; Nowińska 1997; Noworól 2007; Sekuła 2003; Sołtys 2008; Swianiewicz 2011; Szlaska 2007; Wiatrak 2011; Wojtasiewicz 1999; Wysocka, Koziński 1998; Ziółkowski 2015].

S. Denicolai, L.G. Gordon, G.P. Green, C. Flora, J.L. Flora, S. Leach, F. Naschold, B. Nylehn, V. Pina, T.H. Poister, A. Rodríguez-Pose, F.E. Schmidt, G. Schöler, J. Schultz, G.D. Streib, S. Tijmstra, L. Torres, C. Walther, B. Wechsler, A. Yetano, A. Zucchella[3]. A lot of foreign publications were used as the source of models followed in the initial years of Polish municipal strategic governance and primarily referred to its first phase, i.e. planning. The focus on potential advantages offered by strategic governance is the common component of all the above-mentioned publications. It is indicated that strategic governance enables, facilitates or improves as follows:

- the identification of key development problems and potentials of a municipality,
- the identification of its key developmental opportunities and threats,
- the conceptualization of optimal behaviors of local government, community and business against the above-mentioned determinants, as well as supports identifying the target approaches of a municipality towards its environment,
- the selection of and the concept of executors and also the limited means for the projects recognized as the most important for local development,
- the coordination of such projects in time and space,
- the integration of the crucial part of local community around the vision and the specific plans of local development, as well as joint actions for its benefit,
- the initiation, conceptualization and taking advantage of the existing and strategic partnerships with public and private entities,
- the assessment of local growth stimulating activities and their improvement.

It is emphasized that the ultimate effect of application of strategic governance not only stimulates, but sometimes even determines the processes of local development.

2. Research indications

In spite of the abundant subject literature and high popularity of strategic planning, strategic governance, in its full dimension, is present only in some Polish municipalities. The following symptoms confirm its absence, or only partial presence, and also its defects[4] – the characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of local authorities, as well as higher level administration staff:

- low level of knowledge of local development and the described governance,
- skeptical attitude towards strategic planning and influencing long-term, own, crucial activities in accordance with the strategy of development,
- insufficient workload, means and timeframe invested in strategic planning, the organization of strategy implementation and also its assessment,

[3] E.g.: [Backoff et al. 1993; Carr-West 2010; Caulfield, Schultz 1989; Choo 1992; Daley, Naschold 1999; Denicolai, Zucchella 2005; Gordon 1993; Green et al. 1990; Leach, Collinge 1998; Nylehn 1996; Pina et al. 2011; Poister, Streib 2005; Rodríguez-Pose, Tijmstra 2010].

[4] The results of the author's research covering some of these symptoms are presented in: [Sztando 2008; 2013A; 2013B].

- acceptance or lack of recognition for the imperfections of the carried out municipal development strategy,
- exercising tactical and operational municipal governance in isolation from the decisions included in the municipal development strategy,
- refraining from the assessment of strategy or performing an incorrect assessment as a result of modifying its criteria and methods, in order to demonstrate the achievement of strategic goals or justify failure in achieving them,
- approaching a municipal development strategy primarily as an instrument for gaining power, meeting formal requirements to obtain the EU funds or the expression of useless type of fashion followed by the local governments,
- the absence of formally adopted strategy of municipal development,
- long-term acceptance or ignorance that the formally binding strategy of municipal development has become extensively outdated.

The reasons underlying problems occurring in the strategic governance of local development result from the factors which have a significant and, at the same time, negative impact on the processes of such governance. Therefore, these factors can be referred to as its barriers, which were observed in the course of the research described below. The results of scientific repositories penetration indicate that they are rarely mentioned in the subject literature. Therefore, it was adopted that the conducted research results in the discussed area can extend the existing knowledge about the actual situation of Polish, municipal strategic governance. It was also assumed that the new knowledge in this matter can be applied in removing or, at least, reducing them in relation to both, an individual municipality by its local authorities, and in the national dimension by the state government, which shall have an indirect impact on the stimulation of local and supra-local development processes. Moreover, it was adopted that it can also turn out useful in these countries where the development policy decentralization, based on local government, is either planned, currently under progress or has recently taken place. It mainly refers to post-socialist countries, and primarily to Ukraine which finds itself at the threshold of systemic local government reforms. Some of these barriers have originated in the previous political system or present a contemporary, secondary effect of an old, centralized approach to the policy of development. Therefore they can also be present in other countries characterized by the socio-economic evolution path, similar to the Polish one. The purpose of this article is to present the discussed barriers identified in the research of local development governance conducted by Polish local authorities.

3. The origins, purpose, method, techniques and the course of research

Starting from 1996 the author has been carrying out numerous, research and implementation, as well as research and development projects related to the conceptualization, application and evaluation of Polish local development strategies.

It was associated with an ongoing and close contact with the individuals playing crucial roles in municipal strategic governance, i.e. local authorities and their personnel playing top administrative functions. It also meant numerous and direct contact with the problems of strategic governance of local development and the factors causing them, i.e. objective barriers. As a result, since 2000 the author has taken advantage of this situation and performed the systematized research, making their identification and classification one of the research objectives. Starting from 2010 the author had an additional opportunity to perform the above-mentioned research, i.e. play the function of a decision-making body member in one of the counties. The total number of 61 municipalities in the entire country was covered by the research[5]. This article presents the results obtained till 2015, i.e. covers the period 2000-2015.

The method of qualitative field research was applied in relation to the purpose and determinants of the research. Its essence is a systematized observation of the object of the study in the place and at the time in which it occurs and develops. Complexity remains its main characteristics and thus this particular method offers an opportunity to discover all, or at least the majority of the researched subject subtleties. It is considered particularly useful in analyzing the actual ideas, attitudes, relations, roles and activities performed by individual persons and their small groups, which are difficult to capture in a survey, not reflected in documents and not monitored by the public statistics. It offers high research accuracy and, hence, can be applied as the first method in analyzing categories, difficult to generalize, which are still insufficiently recognized, i.e. in exploring research [Kostera 2003, p. 25] and the identified barriers were considered as such categories.

The method of qualitative research applies both to neutral and non-neutral techniques. The first of them consists in conducting observations of which the observed are unaware and in which the observer does not influence them or their activities in any way. In case of the latter such knowledge or impact occurs. The author's direct participation in the above-mentioned projects ruled out the neutral observation techniques, which was therefore decisive about the application of the participant observation technique as the basic one and determining the researcher's open participation in the observed processes. This technique, however, just like every non-neutral one, has a disadvantage of the observer's inevitable impact on

[5] The research covered the following municipalities: Biała Podlaska, Bielawa, Bogatynia, Bolków, Chocianów, Długołęka, Dobromierz, Drelów, Dzierżoniów, Grębocice, Janowice Wielkie, Jelenia Góra, Jeżów Sudecki, Karpacz, Konin, Kowary, Lądek, Lądek-Zdrój, Leszno, Lubawka, Łomazy, Maków Mazowiecki, Mały Płock, Marciszów, Mysłakowice, Nowogrodziec, Orchowo, Osiecznica, Ostrowite, Piechowice, Pieńsk, Piszczac, Płock, Podgórzyn, Polkowice, Powidz, Przemków, Puławy, Radków, Radwanice, Rokitno, Rudna, Stara Kamienica, Starachowice, Stronie Śląskie, Słupca m., Słupca w., Strzałkowo, Sulików, Szklarska Poręba, Świerzawa, Tomaszów Lubelski, Urzędów, Waganiec, Wądroże Wielkie, Węgliniec, Wojcieszów, Wronki, Zagórów, Zgorzelec (urban municipality), Zgorzelec (rural municipality).

the monitored processes and thus the risk of a different perception of the course of events than the one which would have taken place if such impact had not occurred. The observed members of local authorities and management were informed that the research observations would be conducted along with the project work which, though rarely aroused their interest was not objected. There is also no record of any changes in their behaviors resulting from having been informed about the above-mentioned fact. Moreover, the advantage of the discussed technique is an opportunity to observe both processes and objects in their natural environment. Therefore, barriers were identified where they actually occurred and in the situations in which they were revealed. Thus, they were recorded as they actually occurred, rather than as presented by the authorities experiencing them or even co-creating them. It is also worth emphasizing that organizing nonparticipant observations would be very difficult to carry out. It would inevitably be associated with the reduced confidence in the observer and result in an incomplete picture of the existing barriers and therefore different from the actual reality. The long-term participation in strategic governance allowed, however, arranging a different situation. It also resulted in good and lasting personal relations with the observed individuals, which had a positive impact on the scope and accuracy of the observations made. Furthermore, it facilitated the application of the second, supplementary technique included in the qualitative field research methods, i.e. the technique of qualitative interviews. These interviews were applied to collect additional in-depth information about some analyzed barriers, i.e. the ones which, at the time of conducting an interview, were the subject matter of their biggest interest or involvement. The conducted observations as well as interviews were anonymous.

Supplementary sketches and notes were primarily used as the research tools. The first were made in the course of various meetings of the individuals playing key roles in the development strategy construction and implementation processes, and also during the author's own work on such strategies. The latter were performed later and supported by the author's opinions about the observed facts. Yet another tool used took the form of both audio and audiovisual records of some of such meetings. Finally, the author prepared reports about the decisions made during the crucial meetings. In case of qualitative interviews the focus was on conversations with the respondents. The notes documenting such meetings were prepared after they took place.

20 interviews were conducted, whereas the observations were made during:

- 64 trainings held prior to the strategies construction or the organization of their implementation systems, in which the total of 1200 people took part;
- 103 strategic workshops in which the total of 2100 people participated, including the local authorities;
- about 190 working meetings with the local authorities, including about 90 meetings of municipal council commissions discussing development strategies and their implementation or the results of their assessment;

- 64 sessions of municipal councils during which development strategies and their implementation reports were discussed and adopted.

The collected research materials were processed using cause and effect analysis and logical reduction.

4. Strategic governance of local development

4.1. Local development and its perception perspectives

The discussion of identified barriers occurring in the strategic governance of local development requires this concept to be defined beforehand. It has to start with defining the category of local development, since despite its being used in publications, the media, daily activities of public administration and everyday language, it still happens to be understood incorrectly or incompletely. This category is of dual nature and therefore should be perceived jointly in the two below-mentioned ways. The postulate of joint perception means that adopting one of the variants does not represent the method to comprehend the essence of local development, but rather the acceptance for both, along with noticing how they supplement each other to become a unity.

The first way of local development perception can be referred to as the local one. It consists in approaching it in terms of the desirable, positive quantitative, qualitative and structural transformations of the characteristics typical for the local socio-territorial composition, which constitutes the collection of its unique economic, spatial and cultural qualities, where the public component expresses its own needs and the hierarchy of values. In simplified terms, this composition is most often identified with a municipality. The purpose of local development approached in this way comes down to higher quality of life experienced by the local community as a result of meeting its needs, along with the simultaneous generation of values useful for the environment of the municipality. Its other characteristics are as follows: strong, consensual reliance on endogenous factors, self-sustaining, long-term and planning oriented nature, subjectivity of local community in defining its directions and ensuring it, the absence of supra-local unification and compliance with the idea of integrated order. Many definitions express the above described perception of local development. The definition by L. Wojtasiewicz can serve as an example, since according to it the concept of local development means complex qualitative transformations occurring in a particular area and manifested by its residents' standard of living and the functioning of economic entities located in this area [Wojtasiewicz 1990, p. 38]. The analogous, local perspective of local development is also presented by R. Brol, who claims that local development covers harmonized and systematic activities of local community, local authorities and other entities functioning in a municipality, focused on creating new and improving its existing usability, establishing favorable conditions for local economy and ensuring

spatial and ecological order [Brol 1998, p. 11]. Yet another example of such a local approach to local development is the definition presented by H.R. Marques. In his opinion local development represents the process of local space actors' mobilization, accompanied by innovations and aimed at achieving harmonious changes in sustainable development, and also focused on creating more opportunities to be available for population, on stimulating economic growth, the protection of natural resources and social equality [Marques 2011, p. 4].

The second way of local development perception is of supra-local nature. Such an approach means its conceptualization and identification in the scale of supra-local systems, i.e. regions, countries, unions of countries (e.g. the EU) and also in the global scale. In the supra-local perspective it is perceived as such structural transformations of the listed supra-local systems, as well as relations between these structures and their environment, which remain, to a great extent, the effect of local development processes occurring in the local systems they remain a part of. It is, however, not only about the processes of many local systems (municipalities in Poland) and their effects to be aggregated in supra-local, simple "sums". It primarily refers to the existing and new, supra-local and thus regional, state and global development processes to be stimulated, protected and intensified as a result of network interactions present within the local systems, as well as between them and other supra-local entities (e.g. countries, companies, organizations). In generalized and simplified terms, local development, in its supra-local perspective, refers to the transformation of local development processes into supra-local development processes. The purpose of local development approached in this way is a higher standard of living experienced by regional, national or still differently delimited societies, i.e. supra-local communities of people. Therefore, in such a perspective local development is understood as one of the most important, modern ideas of a contemporary state development, including its regions and interstate communities, as the partial alternative for the uniformed development model, created by large economic entities operating in liberal conditions of an imperfect market. It is considered partial, since it is based on the optimality consensus of combining supra-local concepts of local development with the *stricte* supra-local concepts and processes, such as spatial concertation of capital, the development of corporations, unification, international division of work, globalization, etc. Local development in supra-local perspective is, thus, perceived also as an object of supra-local authorities' activities creating, from their levels, adequate conditions for initiating and stimulating local development processes and their transformation into supra-local development processes. The manner in which local development is perceived from a supra-local level appears e.g. in the final part of the definition presented by R. Rezsohazy. In his opinion local development can be defined as a harmonious and systematic activity conducted in a local community with the participation of those interested in it, the results of which serve meeting social needs of the local population and result in an overall progress [Rezsohazy 1988]. A similar approach is presented by I. Pietrzyk, according to which local development

means counteracting extreme liberalism and the reconciliation of entrepreneurship and solidarity among people, solving market defects and imperfect information, setting public initiatives free and taking advantage of the entire local potential for development, thus concentrating local actors around their "own" development program and obtaining such synergic effects which strengthen the overall growth dynamics [Pietrzyk 1997, pp. 89-90].

4.2. Local development governance

Management is defined as an effective usage of resources to achieve the set objectives. Management, as a science and as practical activity, originates from the output of identification, creation and verification of managerial operations, determinants and desires for success in economic activities. Such operations remain within the framework of its traditional and, in a way, fundamental domain. However, in the course of the recent several decades it was extended by the new domains. One of them referred to the activities performed by public authorities which is nowadays usually named public governance. This different name was introduced to better reflect the essence of such governance consisting in stimulating rather than determining changes in the objects of governance and in multidimensionality of these changes. In the systematics of sciences, not only the Polish one, it is a sub-discipline of management science, however, in practice there is a set of the best practices to be followed by public authorities at different levels, with its origins not only in general management, but also in many other areas of knowledge analyzing social, economic and environmental processes. Initially public governance was referred, and still is, to individual public institutions which were supposed to achieve certain objectives. The recent approaches also refer them to groups of such institutions which create a given system or a set, homogenous enough in its functions and structure that is also described as an organization aiming at something. Such approaches were and are justified in some situations. However, for some time recently the category of management, both in theory and practice, has been ceasing to be the sole domain of commercial activities, but also of the organizations establishing coherent systems. In different contexts management is more and more often combined with a society and its organized activities having other than economic incentives and apart from that also with space and natural environment, including processes occurring within their framework. For this reason the concept of public governance is currently also used in terms of activities undertaken with reference to structures and phenomena characterized by a low level of closure, related to entities constituting the elements of organizational networks characterized not only by the difficult to define clearly but also fluctuating boundaries. It refers to structures and phenomena which are on many occasions significantly different, in various aspects, from the organizations and processes occurring in them, even the non-profit ones. The term governance is also used nowadays in expressing efforts to achieve collective objectives, strictly

based not only on economic rationality, but also that of public choice, incorporating e.g. economic, ecological, scientific or even religious rationality.

This trend covers the categories of local and supra-local governance of local development. First of them refers to local development in a local perspective, i.e. to a defined, multidimensional process occurring in a municipal scale, the participants of which are local enterprises, public institutions, non-governmental organizations, elements of ecosystems, natural and other persons, and not just to a municipality understood as a set of organizations creating a municipal institutional system. It means taking advantage of this institutional system to stimulate transformations of the local system structures, mutual relationships between them and with their environment, so that they represent local development. Analogous, supra-local management of local development refers to local development perceived in a supra-local perspective, i.e. transformations of supra-local systems' structures, as well as the relationships between these structures and their environment, as direct and indirect effects of local development processes occurring in local systems which they are a part of. Moreover, it means taking advantage of supra-local institutional systems to establish supra-local conditions for local development, perceived in a local perspective, for the purposes of interventional stimulation of its processes and the transformation of local development processes into supra-local development ones.

4.3. Strategic approach to local development governance

Strategic management is the reaction of science and real life practice to the need for carrying out such activities by various organizations, which in the changing, uncertain and frequently unfavorable environment can provide the possibility for identifying and achieving goals in a satisfactory manner. It is assumed that strategic management evolved in the sphere of business in the mid-19th century, but the researchers trace its origins outside this sphere and much earlier, even in the ancient times. In the recent decades it has been adopted on the grounds of public governance and, therefore, nowadays constitutes one of its most important ideas, research areas and objects for practical application, and due to the previously described reasons, most often defined as strategic governance.

Despite the fact that local development strategies are quite often prepared and officially adopted not only by Polish municipalities, the concept of municipal strategic governance of local development is rarely used and defined in the subject literature [see e.g.: Klasik, Kuźnik (eds.) 2001; Ziółkowski, Goleń 2003; Strojny 2008; Denicolai, Zucchella 2005; Worrall 1994]. Such concepts as "strategic governance (management) of municipal development" and "strategic governance (management) of a municipality" are more often defined, but here the emphasis is placed on the stages of strategic approach, or a holistic approach to governance of a municipality, representing a multi-entity municipal organization[6], rather than

[6] Polish municipalities function based on various entities (e.g. schools, municipal services companies, municipal water and sewage companies, social welfare centers, municipal culture centers, sports

on structural transformations and local system relationships which constitute local development perceived from a local perspective. The essence of municipal strategic governance of local development is, however, the complex impact of the municipal authorities on these structures and relationships in accordance with the rationality of strategic operations (in line with the stages of strategic approach) and by means of entities belonging to the municipality, but ensuring that changes of these structures and relationships have the characteristics of local development, perceived from the local perspective. They can also be defined as a strategic composition of diversified activities carried out by the local authorities and focused on the local system (Polish municipality), as well as its environment, undertaken in accordance with the characteristics of local development in a local perspective, to ensure its efficient achievement in the real life practice.

The literature does not offer definitions of strategic approach to governance of local development in the supra-local perspective of its perception. Nevertheless, such a concept can be identified analogously as it has been done above. Supra-local strategic governance of local development can be defined as the complex impact of supra-local authorities on the structures and relationships present in local (municipal) systems constructing a supra-local one (a region, a state, an international organization, e.g. the European Union), implemented in accordance with the rationality of strategic operations (in line with the stages of strategic approach) and by means of entities belonging to supra-local government or the state, in order to create and boost the processes of local development, perceived in a local perspective, and also their transformation in supra-local development processes. The plans entitled as regional or national strategies of local development have not been prepared in Poland as yet, but numerous supra-local strategic plans include a lot of contents referring to the creation of local development processes from a supra-local level[7]. Therefore, a strategic approach to local development governance in a supra-local perspective of its perception is not just a theoretical concept – it is, indeed, reflected in the real life practice.

5. The identified barriers

Local and supra-local strategic governance of local development implies the need for distinguishing two major sets of barriers characteristic for such governance and based on the criterion of its subject. The first set includes strategic governance barriers of local development carried out by the local authorities. Attention should be paid to the fact that they represent not only local barriers, since not all of them have their source in the characteristics of a local system or local entities creating its

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and leisure centers, industry and technology parks) constituting their ownership or co-ownership and usually taking the form of a budgetary entity or a commercial company.

[7] The examples of such plans are as follows: development strategies of Polish regions and the National Strategy of Regional Development 2010-2020: Regions, Cities, Rural Areas.

development. Some of them are exogenous i.e. of supra-local origin. The second set covers strategic governance barriers for local development carried out by regional authorities, state government and the authorities of international organizations. All barriers listed in this set are the supra-local ones. As it has already been emphasized, the conducted research focused on the identification of barriers covered by the first set. Therefore they will constitute the subject matter of further discussion. Based on the similarity criterion they were divided into several groups which are presented below.

The first group of barriers, identified in the course of research covered the **barriers resulting from the theory and practice mismatch, i.e. in other words, methodological barriers**. This term was used to specify the disadvantages of some concepts of strategic governance of local development consisting in their maladjustment to the possibilities and needs of Polish municipalities. Such concepts are reached by local authorities through scientific studies, popular science and didactic publications, as well as trainings. They are also addressed to them by means of strategic plans prepared by hired consultants. The authors of such concepts are frequently not inspired by the idea of teleological and functional perception of methods, techniques and instruments of the discussed governance, since they are primarily motivated by gaining their high theoretical value. Furthermore, this value is obtained only after such methods, techniques and instruments are applied, whereas high complexity remains their main characteristics. The initial effects result in mistakes and failures experienced by the municipal authorities in terms of strategic governance application or even giving it up. The secondary effect, paradoxically, instead of overcoming it, in fact, strengthens the maladjustment of these theoretical concepts to actual intellectual, financial or time resources at the disposal of the local government structures, both currently and in the foreseeable future. In the course of research it was particularly visible in municipalities presenting a small socio-economic potential, where local government administration was made up of several dozens of people highly overloaded with rendering direct obligatory services for the residents, as well as reporting for supra-local supervision entities. The examples of concepts, usually impossible to apply in such municipalities, are the concepts of strategic diagnoses and analyses focused on the detailed, prospective recognition of municipal internal and external environment and also determining its multidimensional position in numerous external frames of reference. Yet another example takes the form of the multithreaded, scenario type and, at the same time, cyclical strategic programming concepts One more example are the concepts of an ongoing, in-depth monitoring of a municipality and its environment carried out along with the advanced assessment of the effects resulting from the activities implemented by the local authorities.

The second group of barriers includes **legal barriers**. They refer to the imperfections of Polish local government legal system constructed by the state authorities, which restrict the strategic governance of local development carried out

by the municipal authorities. Among this type of barriers certain subgroups can be distinguished. The first of them covers legal regulations referring to the redistribution of budget revenues and earning these revenues by a municipality itself. Such regulations result in the financial weakness suffered by some of them and reduce this part of budget expenditure which can be independently formed by the municipal authorities. It significantly limits the spectrum of the available strategic choices to be made, as well as shifts the optics of perception by the local governments of their role from governing towards administrating. The law extensively restricting, in the general opinion, the indebtedness of municipalities is an example of such a regulation [The Public Finance... 2009, Art. 243]. It significantly impedes, and in some municipalities makes it impossible, to collect the means constituting their own contribution, indispensable to obtain the funds from the EU necessary for the strategically crucial investments. The second subgroup of the discussed barriers' type consists of regulations referring to the provision of municipal services. These regulations impose standardized strategies for such a services provision on the municipal authorities, whereas their own systemic concepts, in this respect, would be significantly or completely different and, as it can be inferred, frequently much better. The amendment to the Act on maintaining cleanliness and order in municipalities passed on 1st January 2012 [The Law on maintaining cleanliness… 2013], which introduced revolutionary changes in municipal waste management, can serve as an example. The third subgroup of the discussed barriers covers regulations related to spatial management. Some of the spatial law provisions significantly impede the local authorities in implementing crucial spatial management changes, whereas spatial structure development remains one of the most important components in strategic governance. It refers e.g. to the provisions allowing for long-term blocking of land property to be used for the purposes of public investments by natural persons and enterprises, as well as depriving municipalities of architectural powers for the benefit of counties. The fourth subgroup includes the provisions referring to the obligatory, type rather than task oriented arrangement of budget expenditure. The construction of the core financial instrument for local development governance, in accordance of the "type philosophy", remains in the opposition to the strategic way of thinking following the category of objectives and tasks aimed at their achievement. It does undermine the incentives for strategic governance.

Another group covers the **cooperation barriers**. One of the success factors in the construction and implementation of local development strategy is the establishment of cooperation relations between the local government and the strategic cooperation partners such as enterprises, NGOs, trade unions, other local governments and state government administration units. Strategic cooperation can result in the achievement of such local development goals which are not feasible, either partly or entirely, in the way of autonomous activities. It allows not only for combining the available resources, but most of all for obtaining the economies of scale and the synergic effects, as well as the necessary compromises. Having considered the

number of potential partners and the scope of the potential development goals, the joint achievement of which is possible and founded, the true, lasting and resulting in significant effects strategic partnerships remain relatively rare in the reality of Polish communes. It mainly refers to partnerships other than inter-local governmental ones. The basic cooperation barrier is the environment perception by potential partners only from the perspective of individual, narrowly approached interests. The adverb "narrowly" expresses the existence of the second cooperation barrier related to the first one. It is the lack of awareness of the potential partners about the possible to accomplish, mutual benefits, which often are of an indirect nature and become noticeable in a long-term perspective, but the broadly understood value of which can be much larger than the savings made as a result of refraining from such cooperation.

Yet another group of barriers can be referred to as the **barriers of public participation**. The recognition of local community as the major beneficiary of local development implies assigning it with the role of a community participating in governing this development. Public participation should occur, in particular, at the stage of forming the strategy of local development. In Polish, but not only Polish practice, such participation is most often carried out as public consultations. They are conducted in the form of surveys addressed to the municipality residents and the management of local enterprises in order to collect and analyse their opinions, also supported by strategic workshops. The latter take the form of meetings involving local leaders representing local social and professional clusters, including local authorities and representatives of higher level authorities, aimed at the joint evaluation of the municipal strategic situation, conceptualization of its desirable development path (strategic objectives) and planning activities ensuring that the municipal structures follow this path (strategic tasks). Therefore, apart from other factors, the success of strategic planning depends on the input made by the community into the local development strategy and specifically its value, i.e. its accuracy in a particular strategic situation, its substantive scope, compliance with reality, innovation, ingenuity and also quantity. Human capital shortage is the first barrier reducing this input. It is easily noticeable in these municipalities which struggle with the liquidation of many local enterprises and public entities, with social pauperization and social pathologies, as well as negative migration, especially among young, enterprising and publicly active people. In the environment where knowledge, skills, creativity, cultural taste, the scope of immaterial environment perception (in all its aspects), intelligence (in all its spheres), the desire for personal development, as well as creativity and reflexivity of local community present, in general terms, a relatively low level, its collaborative input in the development strategy content remains most often quite small. The second participation barrier results from the shortage of positive elements of local social capital. They are noticeable in all types of Polish municipalities, including the ones featuring high development level. Insufficient mutual trust, respect and readiness for joint cooperation of local community members result in the fact that some of them do not get involved in strategic planning, even if they are individually invited

to do so by the municipal authorities. Those, however, who take part in it, due to the absence of the above-mentioned elements of social capital are less capable of exchanging knowledge and other information, conceptualizing common goals and tasks and also resigning from particularisms and concluding compromises. Negative elements of local social capital have similar impacts and can be referred to as the third participation barrier. Local corruption, coteries or local variants of xenophobia discourage the local community to get involved in collaborative planning and reduce the value of its effects, thus making the strategy a tool in the hands of just a part of residents or entrepreneurs in safeguarding their interests.

Another identified type of barriers is represented by **information barriers**. They cover the limitations in accessing data used in the process of a strategy conceptualization and application. Polish municipal strategic diagnoses, the strategy implementation monitoring and its evaluations are based on the data originating from such sources as public statistics, monographs, registers and records, as well as the prepared earlier internal and external diagnostic and planning documents. The scope of data collected in this way, however, is frequently incomplete and hence some of the phenomena and processes, including the most problematic ones, remain disregarded. It reduces the accuracy of the municipal strategic situation assessment and internal activities evaluation which, in consequence, increases the number of strategic decisions other than the optimal ones. Among information barriers the first one to be listed is the information access barrier to the system of state public statistics. It provides data about municipalities to a lesser extent than in case of counties and regions, even though they are collected by this system. Another barrier is the fact that the discussed system does not provide many characteristics of the economic entities employing 9 or fewer workers, e.g. the actual number of workers they employ. It has a negative impact on the strategic governance of local development in the municipalities the economy of which is mainly influenced by such enterprises. It sometimes also happens that the data originating from the above listed sources are significantly outdated, since at the moment of their first provision they illustrate the situation being already a year old. It results from the long data collecting, processing and statistical information publication cycle. It also happens that the requirement of statistical confidentiality constitutes a barrier here. It makes the situation assessment especially difficult in the municipalities where economy is dominated by one large enterprise.

The **barriers resulting from following certain patterns** were also identified. They refer to behaviours of other public entities and the messages they send discourage local authorities to take a strategic approach to local development. During the recent two decades many development strategies of Polish municipalities, as well as counties and regions, were not carried out at all or implemented only in the part which, in the opinion of many authority members, would have been executed anyway, without any strategic planning in place. Therefore, as the resolutions taken by the decision making bodies of local government, they were put aside for years

and left unimplemented in the current functioning of the executive bodies (village heads, mayors, city presidents). They were neither the subject of implementation, nor evaluation, or current monitoring. Such situations resulted not only from the simple abandoning to implement them, but often also from a low substantive level of a particular strategy, questioning the merits and possibilities of its implementation. They also remained the effect of assuming, prior to the planning process, that the strategy would mainly play the role of an attachment to the application for granting financial support from the EU funds, allocated within the framework of programmes addressed to the local government beneficiaries. Such phenomena, occurring in some local governments, were and still are subject to observations of other local government authorities. As a result, some members of these authorities present the persisting opinion that the local development strategy represents a document which is good to have purely for image purpose, or should exist to meet the above-mentioned formal requirement. Automatically, their inclination towards not only correct strategy construction, but also the sole idea of strategic approach to governance of local development, was reduced. Incorrect patterns were also provided by the supra-local partners of local governments. The implementation of the Integrated Operational Programme for Regional Development (IOPRD) by the state and regional authorities can serve as an example in this case. It was one of the six operational programmes aimed at the realization of the National Development Programme in the period 2004-2006. Within the framework of IOPRD the financial means were distributed for the development oriented, strategically important projects to be carried out by the municipal local governments. One of the requirements to be met by the beneficiaries was attaching a special Local Development Plan (LDP) to an application for the financial support to be allocated to a particular project. The required LDP structure indicated that it was supposed to play the function of a strategic instrument to be used in the local development governance. However, in the process of the attached LDPs verification no attention was paid to the fact whether their content was capable of playing this particular function. It was only evaluated if it was composed of the required parts, if the project name, the financing of which was applied for, was provided and whether the amount and the project execution period were the same as those stated in the application. The majority of LDPs were, therefore, characterized by a relatively low quality and the idea of preparing planning instruments for local development governance and applying them in practice was partially devaluated in the local governments' environment.

The next barrier is related to the **substantive support barriers**. The first of them refers to the low level of services rendered for the benefit of local governments by the consulting entities. Some of the companies, operating on the consulting services market, provide services for Polish local governments related to the strategic planning of local development, even though their permanent employees, or more often temporarily hired subcontractors, present neither sufficient knowledge nor experience in this matter. It does happen that the content of development strategies,

prepared based on the consulting services, is the repetition of strategic governance or management handbooks and regional or national development plans. It also happens that they represent, to a great extent, a copy of the strategies developed by other local governments. Their dominating part is frequently devoted to diagnostics, whereas the planning and implementation parts remain unacceptably generalized, unclear and incomplete. In the course of the performed observations, the mistakes made by companies presenting a well-established or even internationally recognized reputation, were noticed, probably resulting from exceeding the potential span of control by the responsible persons, who are simultaneously involved in numerous planning projects for many local governments. For example, they suggested solutions for one municipality based on the strategic analysis results of another one. Low quality of consulting support is strictly connected with the low level of outlays allocated by the local authorities to such support. It is easy to observe in the municipalities where budget revenues cannot cover the costs of meeting the primary needs experienced by the local community and the local companies. The willingness of such municipal authorities to increase expenditure on proper strategic planning, i.e. on surveys, strategic workshops, diagnoses, foresights, or finally the development of a strategy itself, persists, in general terms, on a low level. It is still lower in terms of the funds allocated to the organization of a strategy implementation, i.e. for example on trainings, software or evaluation. Therefore, the lowest offered price is used as the only or primary criterion in the process of an entity selection which is supposed to support the local government in the construction of a development strategy, or provide any other service related to strategic governance. As a result, agreements are often concluded with those tenderers whose service is not only the cheapest, but also the narrowest in scope and of the poorest quality. Low level of Polish universities involvement in the practical strategic governance of local development should also be included among the barriers of substantive support. The research devoted to strategic governance, conducted by the public authorities is obviously carried out, but the practical involvement of universities in the creation of local development strategies remains a rarity. Even less frequent is their participation in the organization of a strategy implementation and assessment. Limited interest of scientific circles in the real life practice of strategic governance, related to local development, is also reflected in the above discussed methodological barriers.

Personnel barriers represent still another type of obstacles in the strategic governance of local development in Poland. The first of them refers to a small group of workers, at the disposal of a given local government, who represent at least basic knowledge and experience in the area of strategic governance. In some municipal administration structures the cases of such personnel absence were also observed. Similarly to other barriers, it mainly takes place in the municipalities characterized by the lowest socio-economic potential. Personnel barriers result not only from insufficient qualification of administration employees, but also their relatively small number. An extensive burden with current tasks makes it impossible to assign such

staff to additional workload resulting from the application of strategic governance and expecting them to complete adequate trainings or postgraduate studies. Personnel barriers are related to the above discussed poor financial situation of some municipalities, however, it is not the only reason. Their sources should also be sought in universities offering courses educating future local government personnel. Their graduates do not acquire sufficient knowledge in the area of strategic governance performed by a local government. Recruitment procedures, used by the municipal local government, must not be ignored either. It does happen that the individuals whose education is not related to a local government functioning, even indirectly, are employed in the local government administration structures.

The final group of barriers is represented by the **barriers for local development strategic governance resulting from personal qualities of the local authorities i.e**. the individual traits of those playing the role of members of the decision making and executive bodies in local governments. The first of such barriers is related to the already discussed personnel barriers, however, its separate specification results from the fact that the members of decision making bodies do not constitute the personnel of municipal administration. Many of them are unaware of the problems related to strategic governance of local development, e.g. not only in terms of governance processes themselves, but also the potential advantages to be achieved, for both a municipality and for themselves. The second barrier of the discussed type takes the form of distrust in long-term plans. It usually has its source in negative experiences related to long-term planning performed prior to the systemic transformation in Poland, i.e. before 1989. The socialist plans were frequently implemented in disagreement with the adopted guidelines and, even more often, they did not comply with the local communities' needs. Their implementation used to be solely superficial or fragmentary. They also played political functions and carried out supra-local objectives, ignoring the opinion of local communities. Risk aversion to the negative assessment of future governance processes remains yet another barrier. Adopting a strategy and providing it for the public is equivalent to specifying the criteria which can be applied in later verification of the local authorities' effectiveness. Some Polish local government representatives refuse to take up this risk. One more barrier also takes the form of risk aversion towards the negative assessment of governance processes, the ones which took place in the past, or the current ones. Any strategy construction requires open public consultations. Public criticism of local authorities is possible in their course, which is sometimes presented in the local media. The limited inclination towards delegating the decision-making competencies in strategic matters is also included among the observed barriers of the described type. As it has already been mentioned, one of the key strategic planning characteristics is the participation of partners in making decisions about the directions of future municipal development. It means the need for giving up some powers, in terms of defining the local development goals, and determining the specific projects aimed at their achievement. Some of the local government members do not recognize such an idea

or accept it to a very limited extent. They are of the opinion that partners are not capable of bringing any added value to planning processes, or have such a strong sense of power that they desire is to maintain either all or at least the majority of the resulting prerogatives. The barrier related to personal qualities of local government members also takes the form of their tendency for instigating the politically motivated conflicts. Polish local government practice shows their relatively frequent occurrence. They often result from deep differences in the presented worldviews and visions about the future, as well as the simple struggle to win voters, deprived from any significant justification. The conducted research also revealed the related contestation of the planning achievements accomplished by the former authorities. The strategic plans inherited from the previous local government were rejected by the new one after the elections, not only due to the lack of acceptance for their content, but mainly as a result of the ambitions to develop its own and new ones, thus strengthening its own publicity. It was also observed that the local development strategy was approached as the instrument in an election campaign. Its construction process remains the object of interest of the local community and, hence, also the media coverage. Therefore, some local government representatives, driven by the motivation to use this situation for their own popularity in the coming elections start strategic planning in the final phase of their term of office. At the same time, they organize it in the way to reflect the expectations of all voters in such a strategy and achieve the biggest media coverage. Thus, they do not develop an optimal strategy with the choice option as its essence, but the list of wishes impossible to carry out in the assumed period of time and using the available means.

6. Final remarks

The purpose of this article was to present, identified in the research, barriers of local development strategic governance conducted by Polish local authorities. Nevertheless, this presentation should not result in the conclusion that their effect is giving up strategic governance of local development by Polish municipalities, or just its superficial execution. In spite of the fact that in many municipalities they result in either failure or disadvantages of such management, still Polish local government practice offers examples of their effective elimination or absence in certain municipalities. In the course of the conducted observations the examples of advanced strategic governance of local development, initiated immediately after the transformational reactivation of municipalities in 1990, were recorded. Polkowice municipality can serve as an example, the authorities of which as one of the first in the country adopted the strategy of local development and are currently carrying out an extended, effective system of strategic governance, based on the experiences gained in the process of developing and implementing as many as six consecutive strategies of this kind. The strategic governance of local development, effectively overcoming the discussed barriers, was also recorded in Bogatynia, Grębocice, Nowogrodziec and other municipalities.

Moreover, the above presentation of barriers does not exhaust all aspects of the studied problem. Future research can identify more of them. Such studies should, however, be primarily focused on determining precisely their prevalence and the intensity of negative impacts on objective governance. They should also cover in-depth analyses of the sources responsible for such barriers, the identification of mechanisms underlying their negative impacts, as well as designing and practical verification of the instruments applied in public policies, carried out by the authorities at different levels, which shall either eliminate or reduce the discussed barriers. It is also necessary to analyse the experiences of other countries and their local governments, which could be used for these purposes in Poland. The advantages obtained as a result of such research and implementation activities will definitely remain considerable and, what is more, they will be revealed not only in various local areas, but also in different supra-local dimensions.

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