

Social Economy in Poland

Past and Present



INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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edited by
Marek Rymśza
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Social Policy Program

The project “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków” is implemented within the framework of EQUAL Community Initiative.

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Marek Rymsza, Tomasz Kaźmierczak

Toward a Polish Model of Social Economy¹

1. The Development of Social Policy in Europe: From Workers' Compensation to Social Inclusion

The problems which affect Polish society – including poverty, unemployment and social marginality – are not unique to Poland. Many European inhabitants, even in Europe's wealthiest nations, are experiencing these problems. There are differences between countries, but these differences pertain to scale and intensity rather than to the nature of situations. Thus, the differences are based on quantity, not quality. Social exclusion, which is widely understood as a combination of the above-mentioned problems, is a fundamental social issue (alongside the aging of the welfare society) facing Europe today.

There are multiple and varied sources of social exclusion of entire groups and regions. The current globalisation of the economy – an economy that seems to be losing its basic servile mission – is one of the conditions making this phenomenon possible. Rational management

¹ The following text introduces the main topics of this volume, which is composed of translations of articles that were written (in Polish) for the project entitled "Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków". In the following text we have included translated excerpts of our introductions to volumes from which we selected articles: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymsza, *Introduction*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymsza (eds.), *Kapitał społeczny. Ekonomia społeczna*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2007, pp. 9-14; T. Kaźmierczak, *W stronę nowego Liskowa. Inspiracje, konteksty i cele projektu studyjno-badawczego*, in: T. Kaźmierczak (ed.), *W poszukiwaniu strategii pobudzania oddolnego rozwoju wiejskich społeczności*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008, pp. 215-228. These excerpts are not in quotation marks because they have been reworded appropriately for the purposes of the following article.

evaluated in strictly economic terms often produces results that are counter-productive from the perspective of social needs and expectations. *Homo oeconomicus* is a construct. In reality, a human being is not only the producer or the consumer, the employee or the employer. Human economic activities are rarely one-dimensional. Economic theory itself is increasingly taking this into consideration. Contemporary economists who are interested in accurately describing people's market activities – through the language of economics – are using concepts from social psychology and sociology². Interdisciplinary studies and theories are appearing, such as economic sociology. The economic theory of classical liberalism is simultaneously developing the concept of market failure and its side effects. The concept of market failure allows us to determine the conditions surrounding “market successes”. In other words, we can describe the conditions and space in which market mechanisms do not bring effective solutions. Side effects (which are usually negative) logically appear alongside management. They are rarely considered in calculations made by enterprises. Environmental pollution is an example of the most commonly understood side-effects of “rational management”.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that one of the side-effects of market economic forces, which we have been observing for some time but which has only recently been recognised as a social problem, is the exclusion from the labour market of people who do not fit into the equation of generating profit, accumulating capital and consumption patterns.

Currently, Europe is searching for solutions to the issue of social exclusion. In fact, there is no choice in the matter. At the turn of the 20th century, when the issue of workers' rights appeared as a result of hastening industrialisation, the concept of a welfare state was created. This concept was developed through several decades of thought, which referred back to the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s. One could say that the issue of workers' rights produced a national social policy in Western Europe regarding the market economy. This social policy linked the legitimisation of market mechanisms with the principle of social solidarity. The welfare state – precisely in the name of social solidarity – overcame traditional divisions in society. It guaranteed all citizens their basic needs and standards of living. However, it turned out that the welfare state was not capable of resolving all social problems or preventing new divisions in the labour market and social structure.

² See: R. Frydman, M. D. Goldberg, *Imperfect knowledge economics: exchange rate and risk*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2007.

The problem was not only in the scale of differing living standards, but also in a more basic diversification regarding citizens' participation in the public sphere and activity in the labour market. In other words, the welfare state did not achieve a level of cohesion that would help resolve newly arising social problems. This occurred in part because the competencies of the state increased alongside the development of the concept of the welfare state, thus undercutting the activity of citizens. Meanwhile, the number of citizens who were marginalised increased.

That is why at the turn of the 21st century the evolution of social policy in Europe is turning toward the idea of social cohesion, which can be considered an updated version of solidarity and was constructed in direct response to the problem of social exclusion³. Social cohesion implies a thorough reconstruction (but not a deconstruction) of Europe's welfare states, or in other words – as some prefer to say – the European social model. In the European Union, in the broadly understood social sphere, the core of the social cohesion policy is “active social policy”⁴. Programmes that are organised in the framework of “active social policy” are designed to stimulate beneficiaries, provide specified goods and services, and increase the level of participation in social life and economic exchange.

Undoubtedly, one of the fundamental measures of social cohesion is the strength and character of local social ties. At the turn of the 20th century, during the time of rapid industrialisation, social policy was searching for compensation programmes, improving the working conditions and creating workers' communities within the workplace. One of the effects was social security system⁵. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, in the era of globalisation, social policy is rediscovering the concept of local communities. Contemporary social policy is in large part decentralised and thus based on the principle of state subsidiarity that is oriented toward strengthening social cohesion “at the bottom level”. Thus, a local community is both a target and creator of solutions. A well-organised community can provide its members – and also those who have been excluded from the labour market for a long time – with a unique chance to participate in economic activity. This kind of

³ See: M. Rymśza, *Aktywna polityka społeczna w teorii i praktyce*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza (eds.), *W stronę aktywnej polityki społecznej*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2003.

⁴ See: R. Berkel, I.H. Møller (eds.), *Active social policies in the EU. Inclusion through participation?*, The Polity Press, Bristol 2002.

⁵ See: M. Rymśza, *Social Policy and Social Ties*, in: *On Solidarity* (volume with conference papers), Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna 2006.

community can create high standards of living and secure a feeling of belonging that will be increasingly difficult to achieve in a multicultural world. The need for strong communities is becoming more important as global processes increasingly affect our lives and nation states are becoming weaker. Thus, the welfare state is evolving into a welfare society⁶.

2. Social Economy and Social Capital

In the transition from the welfare state to welfare society, the social economy takes on a particular meaning. We define the social economy as a set of tools that increase the participation of people marginalised by the labour market and members of neglected local communities in both economic activity and social life. The social enterprise is the most common of these tools. Thus, the social economy – when understood as a defined economic sector – is a space for realising programmes that promote active social policy.

It is important to note that the developing concept of active social policy is built on the American concept of workfare. These two concepts, however, are not identical, and the differences between them pertain especially to ethics. The issue of similarities and differences requires a distinct analysis. Here we will highlight exclusively the fact that the differences influence the social enterprise, among other things. Social activation programmes that were developed in the United States primarily emphasise the activation of the individual and support individual economic undertakings. Both emerging social enterprises and individual economic undertakings of clients in these welfare programmes receive support (even extensive support), primarily during the initial phases of their activity. Later they must succeed on the market on their own. This is therefore an incubator model of support for social entrepreneurship⁷. Europe, however, prioritises economic undertakings that have a collective nature, and the support that the social enterprise receives is structural and constant. Support applies not only to the incubation phase but it also includes subsidised employment, tax exemptions, and preferential treatment in calls for tender (for example, social clauses in tender offers).

⁶ See: J.J. Rodger, *From a welfare state to a welfare society*, St Martin's Press, New York 2000.

⁷ This was the basic goal in reforming the social welfare system on the federal level, which was carried out in the 1990s.

It can thus be concluded that the concept of the social economy is a European concept. Its economic foundations are developed primarily at Spanish and Italian, not American universities. In turn the idea of a social entrepreneurship is narrower in substance, but it has a more universal character and is developed also in Anglo-Saxon countries⁸.

The social economy is not a new phenomenon. It developed as a space for theory and economic activity in Europe in the 19th century. It has been rediscovered by contemporary scholars⁹. Thus, there are two waves of the social economy to discuss: the “old” and the “new”. (The text by **Marek Rymśa**¹⁰ in this volume addresses this topic). It seems that the issue of the social economy arises when a disparity between what people expect from the economy and what the economy offers becomes difficult to accept. This occurred in the 19th century, when the concept of the social economy developed in reaction to the exploitation of laissez-faire capitalism. It also occurred at the end of the 20th century. At that time the reason for its revitalisation was the fact that increasing amounts of people became redundant in the division of labour. The new phase of the social economy in Europe is thus a reaction to the new phenomenon of social exclusion. As already stated, the social economy became an instrument for integration within the framework of the European Union’s cohesion policy.

A social enterprise is the institution that belongs to the social economy and engages in business activity. A “normal” enterprise and social enterprise are fundamentally similar: they generate an income, while functioning competitively and risking bankruptcy. It should be noted that the concept of subsidised employment, which is currently developing in Europe, reduces the economic risk of market activity, especially in the social economy sector. This is the differentiating factor between the new and the old waves of the social economy. Mutualities and cooperatives before WWII did not benefit from state support and had to sustain themselves on the competitive open market.

What distinguishes social enterprises from “normal” enterprises is, first, a particular definition of the institution’s goals and, in consequence,

⁸ British work has been especially influential in the development of the concept of social enterprise. See: M. Aiken, *Przedsiębiorstwo społeczne w ekonomii społecznej. Rozwiązania brytyjskie na tle tradycji europejskiej*, “Trzeci Sektor” 2005, No. 2.

⁹ Regarding contemporary social economy, see: T. Kaźmierczak, *Zrozumieć ekonomię społeczną*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśa (eds.), *Kapitał społeczny. Ekonomia społeczna*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ The names of authors whose texts appear in this volume are printed in bold.

the specific types of criteria that are adopted to evaluate its effectiveness. A “normal” enterprise aims to generate a profit – higher income than costs – while the social enterprise aims to attain greater benefits than costs, wherein a benefit is understood as a product of both financial profit and social benefit taken as a whole. The problem lays in the difficulty of measuring social benefit. This difficulty explains the search for new methods, accounting techniques, and audits, which would provide a basis for determining the effectiveness of management in contexts where economic evaluation does not cover their entire scope¹¹. The easiest way to measure the effectiveness of the social enterprise is through the scope of worker (re)integration, for example by counting the number of places of work created for marginalised people.

The second element that distinguishes the social enterprise is the fact that often (though not always) it develops from a local, collective initiative. When this occurs, the ties among the social enterprise, social capital, and local development become clear. Firstly, the social enterprise is formed in essence thanks to local, social capital and this capital – as a positive “side effect” of management or as a consciously established social aim – multiplies. Secondly, the social enterprise can be a unique mechanism for transforming social capital into other kinds of resources: material, organisational, human, and infrastructural. All of these can be understood as capital resources in later activities of both the social enterprise and other social structures that already exist in a given community or are newly forming. Thus, the social enterprise becomes a stimulating agent in local development. Although its measure of effectiveness is much more difficult to ascertain than the measure of effectiveness of enterprises promoting reintegration into the labour market, both functions of the social enterprise are undoubtedly seen as equally important¹².

Thus, the social enterprise transforms an ability/willingness to cooperate (social capital) into local socio-economic development. It is nevertheless important to remember that not every social enterprise will induce this transformation in full. In order for that to be the case, it is necessary for the social enterprise to be embedded in the local community. A well-established social enterprise is a social enterprise that is subsumed

¹¹ See: M. Bohdziewicz-Lulewicz, *Metody i techniki mierzenia społecznego wpływu, czyli jak uchwycić wartość dodaną podmiotów ekonomii społecznej*, “Trzeci Sektor” 2006, No. 7.

¹² See: *The Social Economy in European Union*, a report prepared in 2007 by CIRIEC for the European Economic and Social Committee (No. CESE/COMM/05/2005).

into the local, social network and economic relations and constitutes an element of the community capacity. A social enterprise understood in this way can become a key element in the strategy to stimulate endogenous development – a strategy that is directed at neglected communities, especially those located in the countryside and in small towns. It seems that these enterprises essentially constitute a specific and separate kind of social enterprise. We might call it a social enterprise embedded in the local community. Similarly, enterprises that specialise in the social and work reintegration of people who have been unemployed and/or hold a marginalised position on the labour market are called Work Integration Social Enterprises¹³.

Precisely these kinds of initiatives – that is social enterprises embedded in rural communities – appear in the case studies found in this volume. A social enterprise in rural regions is, in our opinion, a flagship product of the Polish approach to the social economy, including the “old” and the “new” waves. This is Poland’s contribution to the development of the social economy in Europe. One of the most important goals of this volume is to bring Poland’s input closer to English-speaking readers.

3. The Social Economy in Poland

In Poland in recent years interest in the social economy has clearly increased. Social enterprise initiatives have been launched by numerous non-governmental organisations. Information about many newly established social enterprises, especially social cooperatives, have appeared in the media. This new wave of interest in the social economy is linked to the perception of both policy-makers and public opinion regarding the necessity for re-orienting social policy toward activating forms of social support, in place of protective activities, which accompanied the economic reforms of the 1990s.

One element of the debate about the new wave of the social economy that is taking place in Poland is a focus on new members in the sector, such as social cooperatives, not-for-profit companies, and non-governmental organisations. They are economically active while ignoring the Polish tradition of the social economy, which dates back to the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and includes some traditional institutions,

¹³ C. Davister, J. Defourny, O. Gregoire, *Work Integration Social Enterprises in the European Union: An Overview of Existing Models*, EMES Working Papers (No. 04/04), 2004; [www:emes.net](http://www.emes.net) .

such as workers' cooperatives and especially mutualities. Undoubtedly, the legacy of communism partially explains the current situation. Communism distorted Poland's traditions and placed cooperatives within the framework of a centrally organised economy. Perhaps the current situation is also the inevitable result of the political and economic transition, expressing itself in the form of a psychological need "to build everything from scratch".

It is necessary to emphasise that the institutional solutions of the political and economic transition, which were developed after 1989, did not only ignore the idea of the social economy but also made its revitalisation more difficult¹⁴. Three main kinds of reform shaped the transition of the 1990s in Poland: political, economic, and administrative-structural. Unfortunately, the social sphere was considered a peripheral space throughout the 1990s. Social policy was not seen as a developmental policy but rather as a set of actions that compensate side-effects of economic reforms. Its goal was to create a safety net for people who were being marginalised from the labour market. Social policy thus served a protective function rather than an activation one¹⁵. This approach did not facilitate the development of social enterprises. The restructuring of the market itself was supposed to absorb the surplus in work force, but it did not succeed in this. Thus, there arose a need for adjusting the foundations of the social economy.

In a sequence of two decentralising reforms (1990/1991; 1999/2000), the Polish government shifted to local governments the responsibility to organise social welfare (the first reform) and later employment services (the second reform). Unfortunately, the Polish government did not grasp the role of non-governmental organisations. Laws for cooperating between sectors were not delineated until 2003/2004. They created new perspectives for the development of the social economy in Poland. It was third sector organisations that first noticed the need for developing the social economy, and they tried to promote this notion for a few years without success. These organisations seem predestined to carry out the development. However, this was not possible without the support of local governments. The current search for rules of cooperation suggests that in both local governments and organisations of the third sector a need for true partnership is arising.

¹⁴ See: M. Rymśza, *Zapomniany kapitał Solidarności. Ekonomia społeczna w Polsce po 1989 roku*, "Więź" 2008, No. 4-5.

¹⁵ See: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza, *Aktywna polityka społeczna. Stan obecny i szanse upowszechnienia koncepcji*, "Analizy i Opinie" No. 48, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2005.

There currently exists a well-entrenched conviction that inter-sector cooperation, due to synergy, creates optimal conditions for activating neglected communities and solving local problems. Such partnerships do not indicate submission or weakness on any party's part, but on the contrary these partnerships attest to strong partners who are conscious of their strengths and weaknesses. In past years, many partnerships have been established in Poland in order to develop the social economy. The EQUAL Community Initiative has played a significant part in this effort.

4. The “Building a New Lisków” Project

An appreciation for the role of partnerships between sectors in efforts pertaining to the social economy was the basis for the project entitled “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków”. This project was financed by the EQUAL Community Initiative and realised by the Institute of Public Affairs with the Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland, the Working Community of Associations of Social Organisations (WRZOS), and a group of local partners from four counties (in Polish: *powiaty*): Ełk and Nidzica (in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship), as well as Biłgoraj and Lublin-Ziemski (in the Lublin Voivodeship). The project was realised between 2005 and 2008; however, the culmination of the work took place from autumn 2006 to spring 2008. The Institute of Public Affairs fulfilled the administrative functions of the project while simultaneously carrying out analysis and research. These two functions were clearly separate. This volume presents the fruits of the analysis and research.

During the project, in all four of the above-mentioned counties, the first step was to create Local Partnerships, which were composed of partners representing the public, non-government and private sectors. The goal of each partnership was to initiate a social enterprise. The Local Partnerships practiced full autonomy; each had the power to decide on the form of the partnership, principles of its functioning, business plan and legal form of future enterprises, location, and strategy etc. Within the framework of this autonomy the Ełk partnership decided to initiate two enterprises, in Lublin there were three, and both Nidzica and Biłgoraj counties initiated two. It was thus planned that seven enterprises would take off. It is important to note that the partnerships of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship were supported by the Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland, while the partnerships of the Lublin Voivodeship were supported by WRZOS.

Community development workers arrived – one in each county. Their main purpose was to activate the community where an enterprise was to be initiated. They were not members of the Local Partnerships. The way in which their relationship to the partnership was arranged was purposefully left up to “the natural course of events”. The role of the community development workers was framed in the following way: they were to work on the community capacity, especially with regard to social capital¹⁶.

The actions of the Local Partnerships achieved the “concrete” results that they had aimed for. At the end of 2007, all seven social enterprises were already functioning. One of these enterprises is described in the text by **Paulina Sobiesiak** and **Kamila Hernik** included in this volume. The community development workers can take pride in the “concrete results”, even though these results were not initially their goals. Thanks to their efforts, five new local associations were formed, among other successes.

The analysis and research addressed the observations of the actions directed by the Local Partnerships. Interviews were conducted twice with members of the Local Partnerships (May-June 2006, November 2007), the community development workers regarding their tasks (June-July 2007), as well as the staff of the social enterprises (November 2007). The Institute of Public Affairs created a special research team, which worked for two years¹⁷. Furthermore, from May to July 2007, research was conducted about other grassroots initiatives that pertained to the social enterprise and were developed in rural areas. Case studies were created on the basis of this research, regarding seven communities located in the Podkarpacie, Małopolska, Śląsk Opolski and Lublin regions. Two of these case studies – written by **Joanna Leszczyńska** and **Agata Dobrowolska**, as well as **Kamila Hernik** and **Jacek Kisiel** – appear in this volume.

The analysis and research conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs resulted in a series of four collective volumes¹⁸, from which we selected

¹⁶ See: R. J. Chaskin, P. Brown, S. Venkatesh, A. Vidal, *Building Community Capacity*, Aldin de Gruyter, New York 2001.

¹⁷ The research team was composed of the following people: Marta Łuczyńska, Anna Olech, Agnieszka Rymśza, Dobroniega Trawkowska, Kamila Hernik, Dominika Skwarska, Paulina Sobiesiak and chief of the team was Tomasz Kaźmierczak; the person in charge of determining the content was Marek Rymśza.

¹⁸ They include: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza (eds.), *Kapitał społeczny. Ekonomia społeczna*, Warsaw 2007; T. Kaźmierczak (ed.), *Zmiana w społeczności lokalnej*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2007; T. Kaźmierczak, K. Hernik (eds.), *Spoleczność lokalna w działaniu*, Warsaw 2008; T. Kaźmierczak (ed.), *W poszukiwaniu strategii pobudzania oddolnego rozwoju wiejskich społeczności*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008.

the articles which appear in translation in this volume. These texts provide information that helps answer a key question: in what way can endogenous forms of development be initiated in neglected communities? The title “Building a New Lisków” reflects precisely that direction of thought. Lisków, a rural Polish village located not far from Kalisz, was an exemplary model of local development. It transitioned from a state of impoverishment and illiteracy to economic, social, educational and cultural prosperity. A social enterprise, organised along the lines of the “old” social economy, played a key role in Lisków’s transformation. **Tomasz Kaźmierczak** and **Paulina Sobiesiak**’s text addresses this subject.

Essentially, Lisków is an excellent illustration of an approach to the problem of social development that emphasises the role of social capital and the social economy, among other issues. The history of inter-war Lisków is the story of how one community that lacked material resources initiated a social enterprise by increasing the level of social capital and developing its potential, thus turning the enterprise into an engine of local development.

5. The Development of the Social Economy in Poland: Case Studies

This volume – in addition to this introduction – includes eight articles that address the development of the social economy in Poland. These texts discuss examples of market initiatives during the first and second waves of the social economy. They concentrate on a social enterprise that was developed in rural areas. A rural social enterprise is specific because there are no large economic investments there to which small local enterprises could join. In rural areas the relations between a social enterprise and social capital are rather visible. Furthermore, it is easier to see the cultural continuity between the first and second waves of the social economy in the countryside than it is in urban agglomerations. In rural areas it is possible to see an outline of the Polish model of the social economy.

In the 19th century, what identified a social enterprise in Poland was its patriotic (especially on Prussian territory¹⁹), grassroots, and

¹⁹ At the end of XVIII century Poland lost its independence. For more than 100 years the Polish territory has been occupied by Prussia, Russia and Austria (then Austro-Hungarian Empire). Poland get back its independence in 1918 after the World War I. Part of the Austro-Hungarian Wmpire was the Polish Galicz (Galicja), where most of the social economy initiatives analysed in this volume were located.

independent character, which was connected to the development of the peasants' movement (especially on Austrian territory). The activating role of the Catholic Church and socially-oriented priests was becoming visible. The development movement that Lisków illustrated continued during the Second Republic of Poland (in the inter-war period), as Lisków became a model village in the 1930s. The communist period (1945-1989) interrupted the development of the social economy. During the Third Republic of Poland, after the shock of the initial transition, there was a return to the idea of local development within the framework of the new wave of the social economy. For now these initiatives are being performed outside of the main set of reforms in the transition. Both Dolina Strugu, which is described by us (and not only us), and the economic initiative taken by the village Rodaki that was "discovered" by our research team, serve as spectacular examples.

The first part of the volume is composed of case studies. They include the development of a rural enterprise during the first wave of the social economy (this pertains to Lisków, Handzlówka, and Zaborów), as well as the second wave (including Dolina Strugu, Rodaki, and Prostki). In the appendix there is a map of Poland, which shows the above-mentioned locations.

Izabella Bukraba-Rylska's text entitled *Social Entrepreneurship in Poland in the 20-year Period Between the World Wars* appears first in the volume. The author creates a unique reconstruction of models of the social economy during the Second Republic of Poland, describing three known local initiatives: Lisków, Handzlówka, and Zaborów. In addressing local economic initiatives and more complex actions intended to activate the local communities, she points to socially active members of each community. In all three examples, that activation turned out to be a key agent in development, creating a situation in which each following successful, local initiative stimulated the next (and there were many successes: the organisation of farming clubs, cooperatives, peasants' houses, and even theatres like the one in Handzlówka). Bukraba-Rylska makes comparisons between these three cases. In the section about Lisków, she emphasises the key role of Father Waclaw Bliziński, a strong – according to her, overly strong – leader, who joined the community from the outside. (The priest came to Lisków from Warsaw in 1900, under the orders of a bishop, to become the parish-priest.) A few years earlier, in 1889 Father Władysław Krakowski arrived in Handzlówka. He also played an important role in activation of the community, but he was not a key figure. Franciszek Magryś, a clerk in local council, was the most important player. In turn, in Zaborów, the most important role was played

by a collective actor: emigrants who invested their money, earned in the United States of America, for the purpose of developing the infrastructure of their native village.

The author shows that the development of social enterprises in rural Poland at the turn of the 19th century, especially in Galicia, was not limited to isolated examples, even if it was not as common as economically-oriented migration at the time. Of the factors that support social enterprises, Bukraba-Rylska emphasises strong community ties (which create social capital), as well as the peasant mentality, despite common stereotypes.

While in Izabella Bukraba-Rylska's text Lisków was only one of several discussed examples (and it is not even the most "constructive"; the author seems to highlight Handzlówka most), **Tomasz Kaźmierczak** and **Paulina Sobiesiak**'s article entitled *Lisków – A Model of Local Development?* is entirely focused on the phenomenon of this one village, located near Kalisz, and the leader of its spectacular development, Father Waclaw Bliziński. The authors perceive this socially-active priest differently – as an authority that mobilised others in order to bring Lisków out of poverty and initiate economic, social, and spiritual processes in the village (today they would be called processes of sustainable development). The authors emphasise that from the very beginning Father Bliziński understood that leaders from Lisków would be necessary for the success of the undertaking. He would share his leadership with them, and with time he would give up his power entirely to them. While working toward this, Father Bliziński paid attention to the youth who he raised himself.

Kaźmierczak and Sobiesiak also emphasise the collective character – inspired by the priest – of the economic activities, which were organised as cooperatives. A cooperative called "Farmers' Agricultural and Trade Cooperative" was the engine of Lisków's development. It was founded in 1902, as an agreement between the priest and a group of parishioners. After a few years of activity, the cooperative was officially registered as an autonomous organisation functioning to provide mutual support in the process of modernising farms of cooperative members and to providing the entire local community with good and affordable commodities. It had 35 founding members, but with time it grew into a local establishment that employed around 100 workers.

Father Bliziński understood that people could achieve a lot more through reciprocated trust and collaboration – including in the economic sphere – than they could by working individually, only for their own interests. Father Bliziński started with educational work: he taught

the Liskovians how to read and write. (He did this secretly because the Russian occupiers forbade teaching the Polish language.) Today we would call this educational work investment in human capital. Then he organised various clubs and societies, which created closer ties between parishioners. As people met, they developed greater trust among each other. By discussing topics concerning Lisków, they decided what would be best for everyone, what would be the communal good. Thus, the new created clubs and societies were an investment in social capital. Only peasants who were educated and willing to participate in collective actions were able to set up and lead cooperatives, as well as many other forms of economic and cultural-educational enterprises.

The following texts address the current period. **Joanna Leszczyńska** and **Agata Dobrowolska** (“Dolina Strugu” (“Strug Valley”) – A Partnership Laboratory) describe the phenomenon of market development in four neighboring communities around Rzeszów, at the beginning of the political and economic transition in Poland. The initial motivating force there was a telecommunications cooperative. Its development took place in the 1990s, alongside if not in opposition to the main direction of economic change which was – as stated before – against social Entrepreneurship. The authors point to the historical and cultural conditions that supported this local initiative. They emphasise that Dolina Strugu belongs to the Galician tradition of autonomous rule, which Handzlówka also exemplifies. According to the authors, models of voluntary actions and a tradition of peasants’ movement – which were shaped at the turn of the 19th century, on Polish territories controlled by Austro-Hungarian Empire and later, when Poland was already free during the inter-war period and during communism – were preserved in a way. They resurfaced during the Solidarity movement (1980-1981). Although martial law brought back the realities of real socialism for one decade, after 1989 the Solidarity leaders in Rzeszowszczyzna took on various activating initiatives, of which Dolina Strugu turned out to be most important.

Although they do not emphasise it, the authors point to one other element that led to the success of Dolina Strugu. In addition to human capital (the role of leaders) and social capital (model of Galician self-governance and strong social ties in local communities), financial capital was also important to the success of the telecommunications cooperative. The leaders of the initiative managed to gain financial support from The United States. Without that support it would not have been possible to invest in modern information technology, to break up the

state monopoly of Polish Telecommunications that existed at the time, or to provide high-level services in that branch. Thus, the example set by Dolina Strugu is – in a way – similar to Zaborów. However in Zaborów the investors were Polish emigrants, in Dolina Strugu – inhabitants with a support from American donors. Today the modernising role of support that The United States – as well as other developed countries that were concerned with Poland’s situation such as Great Britain, Canada and Holland – gave to Poland during the first phase of the political and economic transition is often overlooked. Financial support from the European Union (known as pre-accession support) did not begin to reach Poland until a few years later. Dolina Strugu is only one example of successful local initiatives – in the process of re-establishing civil society in Poland – that were established thanks to external support.

Meanwhile **Kamila Hernik** and **Jacek Kisiel** (authors of the article entitled *The Green Goose of Rodaki – The Transformation of a Successful Project into Local Community Development*) describe the phenomenon of local initiatives in Rodaki – a small village in southern Poland. The authors point to Galician models of community membership as well. (Although we will emphasise that Rodaki was located on territory occupied by Russia at the time.) They provide examples of continuing social engagement on the part of inhabitants during the communist period, however in regions that were not politically active at the time and thus were tolerated by the state leadership. Hernik and Kisiel also show that Rodaki’s economic initiative, which was based on raising a unique species of goose, was an entirely grassroots effort. However, a lack of external support made further development and leadership of economic activities on a large scale impossible.

Finally, the last case study addresses an initiative that was started recently: the social cooperative called “The Old School” in Prostki nearby Ełk in Masuria (in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship). **Paulina Sobiesiak** and **Kamila Hernik** (the authors of the article entitled *Sewing the World for Children – The “Old School” Cooperative in Prostki*) describe this initiative. The cooperative in Prostki became active in 2007 and is one of several initiatives of this kind realised under the auspices of EQUAL. For us, it is an especially important example because it is one of seven social enterprises established within the framework of the project called “Building a New Lisków”, which serves as the basis of this volume. It was a local initiative and although it was inserted into a broader Polish project, it remained in that form. The authors show not only how cooperatives contribute to the activation of villages and local

development but also how they change the lives of cooperative members, people who faced long-term unemployment.

6. Toward a Polish Model of Social Economy?

The next three texts that are included in this volume have a different character. They do not analyse specific examples of successful economic initiatives, but they try to formulate general findings regarding the conditions that are necessary for the development of social enterprises in neglected areas and for the Polish model of the social economy.

Marek Rymśza (*The Second Wave of the Social Economy in Poland and the Concept of Active Social Policy*) discusses unions for the development of social enterprises in the context of the increasingly common concept – in Poland and in Europe – of active social policy that is focused on the activation of the receivers of support. In this way, the social economy enters the main political stream. In the second half of the 1990s the European Union gave the social economy a green light. The profile of EQUAL Community Initiative was one result of this green light. It prioritised the development of the social economy as a way of limiting the problem of social exclusion. The author attempts to illustrate the model of a social enterprise that is appearing in Poland through the linked ideas of the social economy, active national social policy, and European Union priorities. He calls this “the Polish approach to empowerment”.

The two other final texts are by **Tomasz Kaźmierczak**. The first of these (entitled *Community in Action – Reflections and Hypotheses*) summarises the above-mentioned monographs about grassroots social enterprise initiatives. The author emphasises the role of community capacity, social capital and relationships between local civil society organisations and local public authorities. The process of activating the local community through outside community development workers is the dominating character of the second article (entitled *A Model of Community Development Work with Impoverished Rural Communities*). This is the form that development took in most of the case studies discussed in this volume. The author points out that this kind of external support is indispensable in the context of the most neglected and impoverished communities. However, a wise community development worker does not arrive with prepared solutions. Instead, he builds (and in part discovers) local potential for endogenous development. He also discovers (and in part educates) local leaders for the community, who will continue his or

her work. Thus, local development is a temporary intervention, which has its beginning and end, although the length of time of the development worker's activities varies: from more than ten years (as in the case of Father Waclaw Bliziński with the Liskovians) to only a year and a half (as in the case of the local development worker in Prostki).

Building the "old" or the "new" Lisków implies an activation of social and economic development processes in a neglected community, which is too weak to achieve this activation with its own strength and resources. Usually such communities are not only poor but are also located outside of the main stream of events. In other words, they do not have contact with the outside world, not even with nearby locations; they are closed and isolated symbolically and sometimes geographically as well. In such cases, the impulse for change must come from outside the community. That is how it was when the leader of progress was a priest (like Father Bliziński), a rural teacher, doctor or landlord, which is also how it is now. The inspirer and initiator of development today can be an individual, but most importantly it should be expected that development will be taken over by public authorities and civil society organisations. At the turn of the 20th century, care for those who found themselves in difficult situations was a moral obligation of educated people. Currently – 100 years later – the programmes that grew out of that kind of work to overcome poverty, programmes which are opposed to social exclusion and social inequality are considered standards of a democratic state and society. Perhaps, in building a "new Lisków", what is most important is not who mobilises the "Liskovians" but simply that someone does it – a person, a public organisation, or a non-governmental organisation – which will result in social stimulation and participation of inhabitants in development efforts.

In many countries, including Poland, local partnership is the inspirer and initiator of development. It also serves as the "bridge" to and for neglected communities. Local partnership is "an agreement among three sectors – public institutes, non-governmental organisations, and enterprises – that want to act together for the purposes of developing their regions. This kind of work has a long-term character and the glue that brings the members together is the shared region where they work and collective goals that they set for themselves. A specific characteristic of this kind of agreement is the dynamic of change – local partnership develops gradually, while the number of members and the range of activities can change"²⁰.

²⁰ R. Serafin, B. Kazior, A. Jarzębska, *Grupy partnerskie. Od idei do współdziałania. Praktyczny poradnik*, Fundacja Partnerstwo dla Środowiska, Cracow 2005.

Patient work is necessary in order for a community – which is often passive, wary, and unenthusiastic about change – to accept and later take over initiatives that were begun from outside. The type of work is significant here; today we would call it community development. According to the typical point of view – now already called classic – community development positions involve work that is carried out by professional development workers in passive and isolated communities, where there exists an agreement regarding basic values, interests, and needs. The purpose is to inspire processes of collaboration, self-help, and autonomy through the mobilisation of members of the community. Groups assigned to particular efforts are the vehicles for change. Their formal status is not important; however, it is important for the members and leaders of these groups to be recruited from within the community²¹. In essence what Father Bliziński did with the Liskovians – he organised the community, developed collaborative and trustful relations, and taught effective action – are the same kinds of activities that are carried out by today’s professional development workers.

The texts that appear in this volume were initially published in Polish. The bibliography notes regarding the original texts appear next to the title of each article. We will not repeat them here. We would like to emphasise that these are not proper translations of the articles. The texts were condensed before they were translated, and the selection of information was made with particular attention to the fact that this volume is for non-Polish readers. The editors of this volume took this fact into consideration during preparation of the text. We attempted to limit details in the information that would not be understood by readers who are not familiar with the nuances of our country’s history and many of its “contexts”. We also limited the number of citations, including those regarding research materials and responses of interviewees. Finally, we organised the articles, eliminating all repetitive materials. We added footnotes “from the editors” in places where we considered them necessary. Moreover, we limited the number of references to Polish literature, most of which would be unknown to foreign readers. Of course, before the texts were published they were authorised by the authors.

²¹ See: J. Rothman, *Three Models of Community Organization Practice*, in: R. Kramer, H. Specht, *Readings in Community Organization Practice*, Prentice-Hall, 1975. Aside from social activation, Rothman highlights two other models of local community organisation: social action and social planning.

We would like to thank the translators for their successful work. Professional proof-reading made by Holly Bouma was also a great help. Thanks to the work of the authors, translators and aditor, this volume is not a loose collection of translations of texts that were published earlier, but rather a consistent – that is our hope – description of the development of the social economy in Poland, illustrated by concrete examples. We welcome all who are interested.

Part I
Social Economy in Poland: Case Studies

Izabella Bukraba-Rylska

Social Entrepreneurship in Poland in the 20-Year Period Between the World Wars¹

In contemporary Polish sociology the reflection on the mechanisms of transformation has been subject to significant evolution. The first analyses, quite general and full of ideological pathos, treated the undergoing processes as an expression of inevitable regularities of a certain effect. The overthrow of communism and return to Europe were supposed to assure Poland the automatic attainment of democratic standards characteristic of civil society and the growth of the free market economy according to the best liberal models. The applied view soon revealed its limitations: it was too general in the sphere of description (because it concentrated on institutional changes on the macro-structural level) and it was quite futile in the theoretical aspect (as a result of the acceptance of the supposedly universal scheme of transformations) while showing, at the same time, deficiencies in historical thinking (as a result of placing the present condition of Western European countries in the centre of interest while ignoring the diachronic analysis).

Encouraging the creation of a different concept of “transformation every day”, Andrzej Rychard wrote: “the application of the prospect that is only macro-systemic has slowly been depleting. New phenomena are appearing in the social and institutional structure. This process of social structuring has been, and will be, proceeding rank-and-file, and often

¹ The article is an abridged English version of the paper published in Polish as I. Bukraba-Rylska, *Przedsiębiorczość społeczna w Polsce dwudziestolecia międzywojennego – przykłady*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza (eds.), *Kapitał społeczny. Ekonomia społeczna*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2007, pp. 127–174 (Editors’ note).

against the intentions of political élites”². It has been observed that the transformation has been occurring not only through “superior political institutionalisation” but also through “superior social mobilisation”³, which generates the need to monitor the phenomena on the micro-social level. Therefore, attention has been drawn to real actions by the people who implement various strategies of coping with reality in everyday life. As a consequence, the discourse has been re-oriented and attention has been drawn to opinions, attitudes and behaviours of the so-called social actors. The causes for interference and delays have been looked for in mental barriers, and even the statements of the need to “reconstruct psychological instruments” of the Polish people emerged⁴.

This radical approach has also been slowly losing its attractiveness and explanatory power, which makes researchers seek more adequate ways of analysing the reality. This time they find it on the meso-social level – in the lives of local communities and the impact of distant past that leaves its stamp⁵ even after a long time has passed. This point of view concentrates, to a much larger extent than the former concepts of transformation, on the direction “from”, i.e. the past, than on the direction “to”, i.e. the future. It is related to the need to consider the changes that are taking place at present from a historical rather than synchronic point of view. Therefore, native realities and not the standards achieved in the West make the best context for consideration. And finally, the interest in real hard facts – local, historical and cultural appears in place of abstract schemes of development.

The considerations of factors that favour changes in the country reflected, to a large extent, the further attitudes of social sciences towards the problems of transformation. At the beginning, it was focused on creating legal and institutional frames for the development of local self-government in rural areas and the liberal economy in agriculture. Then, when it turned out that the completing the phase of

² A. Rychard, *Spółeczeństwo w transformacji: koncepcja i próba syntezy analiz*, in: A. Rychard, M. Federowicz (eds.), *Spółeczeństwo w transformacji. Ekspertyzy i studia*, IFiS Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 1993, p. 21.

³ W. Morawski, *Zmiana instytucjonalna. Spółeczeństwo. Gospodarka. Polityka*, PWN Scientific Publishing House, Warsaw 2000.

⁴ A. Miszałska, *Reakcje społeczne na przemiany ustrojowe. Postawy, zachowania i samopoczucie Polaków w początkach lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, Publishing House of the University of Łódź, Łódź 1996.

⁵ J. Bartkowski, *Tradycja i polityka. Wpływ tradycji kulturowych polskich regionów na współczesne zachowania społeczne i polityczne*, “Żak” and University Publishing House, Warsaw 2003.

authoritative reconstruction of the political system is not synonymous with the development of democratic and free market behaviours, the need to discover limitations that block political and economic activity of inhabitants of rural areas was realised. The initiated research produced a quite pessimistic diagnosis of the state of human capital, which is most often measured by the level of knowledge, aspiration and motivation of people. However, only the notion of social capital that has been developing in recent years emphasises the importance of operating in given environment models, standards and skills of cooperation that may significantly modify both the interaction of macro-structural factors and the individual predispositions of individual actors.

The phenomenon of entrepreneurship considered in such a broad sociological and cultural context may become the subject of studies that will not only lead to the recognition of important mechanisms of changes in rural areas and the assessment of real state of social resources of those environments, but will also offer the chance of consolidating various research concepts (which have been treated alternatively so far). But above all it will justify the suggestion of transition from a liberal to a conservative vision of the elements of transformation.

1. The Notion of Rural Entrepreneurship

While writing about entrepreneurship, the authors usually perceive this notion as specific personality features, attitudes and behaviours of a person that are based on “the tendency to undertake new actions, improve the existing elements of the environment and creatively active attitude towards the reality that is surrounding the individual”⁶. The scope of the notion is either narrower or broader, dependently on whether it takes into account only “the management of the enterprise”⁷, generally understood “business activity”⁸, or whether it is perceived as a method of self-realisation because it results from “the need of independence,

⁶ M. Duczowska-Piasecka, *Przedsiębiorczość na wsi*, in: A. Woś (ed.), *Encyklopedia agrobiznesu*, Innovation Foundation, Higher School of Sociology and Economics, Warsaw 1998, p. 634.

⁷ T. Hunek, *Makroekonomiczne uwarunkowania rozwoju “small businessu” na terenach wiejskich*, in: K. Duczowska-Małysz (ed.), *Przedsiębiorczość na obszarach wiejskich. W stronę wsi wielofunkcyjnej*, IRWiR Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 1993.

⁸ A.P. Wiatrak (ed.), *Rola doradztwa w kreowaniu przedsiębiorczości na obszarach wiejskich*, IRWiR PAN, Warsaw 1996.

motivation to succeed, individualism”⁹. However, concentrating the attention on individuals, the tasks of an economic character undertaken by them (intended to bring profit) and stressing the novelty of their actions is a common feature of various suggestions for definitions. In fact an entrepreneurial person perceived in this way becomes a synonym of a phantom called *homo oeconomicus*, which is favoured by liberals and is guided only by rational calculation and an isolated social, historical and cultural context¹⁰.

Contemporary rural sociologists perceive entrepreneurship as an activity that goes beyond an activity concentrated on farming. Also, the notion of social entrepreneurship that is becoming more popular nowadays does not include many aspects that used to be important for the forms of team cooperation in the country such as orientation at not only economic profit but also at more superior purposes (shaping civic attitudes and skills of cooperation, promotion of education, progress in patriotic and social feelings, moral improvement, etc.). Moreover, references to standards accepted in the environment that were clear in former initiatives (that often take the form of conscious reference to traditional forms of self-organisation and mutual help) and the close relationship of those initiatives with farming, as the most important purpose of individual activity that at some point demands complementation in collective actions directed at the same priority, are often ignored.

All of the mentioned assumptions create such an image of entrepreneurship that is not only far from the realities observed in many developing countries and in places where success has already been accomplished but also that does not allow for taking into account a range of enterprises typical of the country of the past. As a result, this makes it impossible to refer (theoretically and practically) to those experiences as historically verified social resources of rural environments.

The definition of entrepreneurship suggested here refers to all initiatives undertaken both by individual people (individual entrepreneurship) and jointly with others, while thinking about a wider group of beneficiaries (social entrepreneurship), that, while not necessarily violating conventional values, make an attempt to use available resources (material and human) in a new way in order to maintain or increase the

⁹ B. Fedyszak-Radziejowska, *Spółeczność lokalna a rozwój przedsiębiorczości*, in: M. Kłodziński, A. Rosner (eds.), *Rozwój przedsiębiorczości na terenach wiejskich wschodniego i zachodniego pogranicza*, IRWiR PAN, Warsaw 2000, p. 160.

¹⁰ See: J. Beksiak (ed.), *Państwo w polskiej gospodarce lat dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku*, PWN Scientific Publishing House, Warsaw 2001.

living standards of a family or the whole community. Therefore, placing entrepreneurship that is perceived in this way in the local context and not exploiting or even devastating its resources is its essential element; it is, to a large extent, collective and traditional and not individualistic entrepreneurship. It is an aspiration to create additional value of a social character (fulfilment of a liability, earning respect and prestige of the environment, call an institution of higher utility into being, initiating new forms of group cooperation and group bonds, etc.).

Extending the range of the notion of entrepreneurship comes from a conviction, based among others on the readings quoted below, that entrepreneurship motivated in an endogenous way is practicable and therefore does not mean the devastation of found order and the destruction of existing mentality. As it will be shown in cases described below, the concept that differentiates entrepreneurship from ordinary resourcefulness or thiftiness (that in turn are based on the efficient use of existing resources without going beyond previously known and accepted methods) does not have to be imposed in a strict way. Instead of forming “creative destruction” it can be negotiated, and so to say familiarised, and presented in categories that are accepted by the surroundings. Owing to the use of “soft social engineering” it comes to the weakening or even levelling of the shock effect, and the new imperceptibly becomes a piece of tradition and not an element that breaks the continuity and violates the sense of identity.

Therefore, I suggest analysing entrepreneurship in categories of ethos activities perceived as “a style, way of life, attitude of a given social group, moral ones in particular”¹¹. For example, when describing various forms of economic activity undertaken in Asian countries, Brigitte Berger declares herself in favour of such a broad treatment of entrepreneurship. The author indicates that as opposed to the classical model formulated by Max Weber all initiatives observed by her and a group of her colleagues were closely related with the orientation on the family and neighbourhood group (entrepreneurial familism). In fact, the functioning of such entrepreneurship cannot be explained in the language of concepts related to the personality of an individual. As Berger writes, entrepreneurship is a quality of a person “deeply submerged in their culture”¹². It means that market behaviours ought

¹¹ S. Jedynek (ed.), *Słownik etyczny*, Publishing House of UMCS, Lublin 1990, p. 66.

¹² B. Berger (ed.), *The Culture of Entrepreneurship*, Institute for Contemporary Studies, San Francisco 1992.

to be interpreted not in economic categories but in cultural categories – the exchange of information, transfer of symbols, operating on values. Also, it comes out of this that entrepreneurial people, independent of their inclination to novelties, should manifest a large amount of conformity, i.e. they should be quite typical representatives of their group. Otherwise they would not have any chances to become a local authority and their behaviours would not be followed.

The literature related to the Polish countryside (farmers' diaries, speeches by social activists, scientific studies) is very rich. Analysing manifestations of entrepreneurship, at first individual and then social, illustrated by specific exemplifications aims at both documentary value and theoretical intentions: to suggest a hypothesis that concerns the relationship between the first and the second form of entrepreneurship and the relationship (mechanisms of transposition) that joins both types of capital (human and social) with entrepreneurship phenomena.

2. Individual Rural Entrepreneurship

There is unanimity among the scholars that villein service left a particularly unfavourable stamp on the psyche of the Polish farmer and on the organisation of rural life¹³. Also, they share the opinion that threefold dependency (personal, land and court) furnished the farmer with the “second spirit” deprived of initiatives, servile and full of fear¹⁴. Four hundred years of the paternalist rule of landowners undoubtedly influenced not only the mentality of the individuals but also seriously weakened the social capital of the country. Such qualities like a generalised lack of trust and suspiciousness (not only towards the lords and officials but even towards the closest neighbours), reluctance towards large-scale undertakings, particularly collective with strongly developed everyday resourcefulness (many times taking the form of “wheeling and dealing” and even pathology – for example common thefts) and the fear of changes strengthened by respect for authorities were formed in that period.

In farmers' diaries excerpts that prove the appearance of such phenomena can easily be found. Except for traditional forms of cooperation (help with the harvest or in cases of natural disasters) it was

¹³ See: M. Kula (ed.), *Listy emigrantów z Brazylii i Stanów Zjednoczonych (1890–1891)*, Cooperative Publishing House, Warsaw 1973.

¹⁴ See: J. Bojko, *Dwie dusze*, in: J. Bojko, *Gorące słowa. Pisma wybrane*, Universitas, Cracow 2003.

difficult to convince the inhabitants of a village to take part in working for a common good (drainage, building a road, digging a well). The perfect characteristics of such an attitude has been presented by Franciszek Bujak: “lack of the feeling of community, lack of solidarity and no undertaking that requires a larger number of partners would be a success here. Everyone will make an effort, but only if he or she knows that it will bring profit only to him or her and nobody else”¹⁵. It even happened that a farmer preferred to expose himself to a loss than to do something that somebody else could also benefit from. There were a lot of cases that even if the necessary investment was carried out its initiator had to bear the neighbours’ complaints for many years.

Resistance to innovations used in agriculture was equally strong. Ambitious forerunners were laughed at and criticised and many times there were confrontations between them and the rest of the village inhabitants. Thus, how did it happen that the management of their own farm improved, that decisions to emigrate to America were made, and additional extra-farming activities to earn money that had not been done before in the neighbourhood were undertaken? A detailed analysis of a larger number of cases makes it possible to understand this and through this to slightly change a fixed, quite stereotypical vision of the Polish village of the past.

Referring to detailed descriptions of cases reported by diary keepers and authors of monographs allows us to recognise the mechanisms and conditions of the real activity of village inhabitants that were manifested almost on the next day after statute-labour was abolished, and even earlier, although not in such an obvious way. Therefore, we have the impression that the human potential of the Polish countryside was not destroyed but frozen, and this energy that accumulated for centuries manifested itself as massive, intense and large-scale efforts undertaken to strengthen and develop one’s own farm. Two domains at which we can trace certain and dynamic manifestations of individual entrepreneurship, i.e. labour migration and rural crafts, will be observed.

Labour Migration

Even superficial study of a real mobility of peasants since the post returning-property period undermines the sharpness of repeatedly

¹⁵ F. Bujak, *Maszkienice, wieś powiatu brzeskiego. Stosunki gospodarcze i społeczne*, „Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności. Wydział Historyczno-Filozoficzny”, Cracow 1901, Ser. II, Vol. XVI, p. 105.

formulated statements about their supposedly little dynamics or unwillingness to take a risk that are related to the change of the type of work or place of residence for example. This opinion is not verified by historical data¹⁶.

The study of the process of emigration for earning money from the area of Poland, that particularly spread in the Polish countryside in the last quarter of 19th century in all three annexed territories allows for similarly optimistic conclusions. This phenomenon that is not easy to assess in quantity, had two basic types: permanent migration (or for a few years or repeated several times) and seasonal migration that lasted for a few months in a year, but also undertaken repeatedly.

Permanent migration, mostly directed to the USA (but also to Brazil, Canada and European countries), made before 1914 was a minimum of 3.7 million people (1.2 million from the Prussian annexed territory, 1.4 from Russia, and 1.1 million from the territory annexed by Austria)¹⁷. During World War I and the after-war period the next 5 million migrants left, which were in the vast majority the inhabitants of the rural areas.

Then, seasonal migrations caused movement of people assessed at 2.6% of all the inhabitants of Polish people in the territory annexed by Prussia, 3.3% in the territory annexed by Russia and 5-6% in the territory annexed by Austria (not including 3% of Russian people from the area of eastern Galicia). In areas of strong traditions of migration the percentage of people who left was even four times higher¹⁸. Calculations made by Franciszek Bujak in ten villages of western Galicia in 1911 showed that on average almost 13% of inhabitants (from 5.25% to 20%) left those villages for a period of about half a year¹⁹. If it is assessed that nowadays about 2% of the world population (about 140 million) reside in countries that are not their homeland and the data show the dynamics of social mobility in the period of globalisation²⁰, then what ought to be said about the Polish territory where every year 700,000 people, that is 4%

¹⁶ See: F. Koneczny, *Polskie Logos a Ethos. Roztrząsania o znaczeniu i celu Polski*, St. Wojciech Bookshop, Warsaw-Poznań 1921, pp. 66-67.

¹⁷ A. Pilch (ed.), *Emigracja z ziem polskich w czasach nowożytnych i najnowszych (XVIII-XX w.)*, PWN, Warsaw 1984.

¹⁸ W. Bronikowski, *Drogi postępu chłopu polskiego*, State Scientific Institute of Farms, Warsaw-Puławy 1934.

¹⁹ F. Bujak, *Maszkienice, wieś powiatu brzeskiego. Rozwój od r. 1900 do 1911*, „Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności. Wydział Historyczno-Filozoficzny”, Cracow 1914, Ser. II, Vol. XXXIII, Part. I.

²⁰ K. Romaniszyn, *Kulturowe implikacje międzynarodowych migracji*, Catholic University of Lublin, Lublin 2003, p. 34.

of the whole population, not including migration to America, seasonally migrated²¹.

Thus, the farmers that had been attached to the land before left their villages in large numbers and set off to the world, even on the other side of the ocean. And there, being farmers and peasants for many generations, they were forced to live their lives in a large city and work in modern factories. And from there, often still being illiterate, they sent to their country (apart from a lot of money) long letters, often in the form of poems. Hardly could we find a larger concentration of surprises and paradoxes, and also a better confirmation of the determination and ability to face new challenges. Certainly, those Polish peasants, with their actions, gave perfect evidence of the large “resource of pre-industrial energy”, not a bit smaller than the one that was attributed by Arnold Toynbee²² to the western middle-class that started creating capitalism.

Migration movements were in no way a new phenomenon in the traditions of the Polish countryside. Almost right after the property had been returned, migrations for earning money to close and distant places to work on building roads, railroads, construction works and mines (both domestic and foreign) began. Migrants agreed to work as servants in cities and do seasonal work in the field. As a result of such large and massive migrations, independent of the seasons, Polish villages were changing (similar to Eskimo settlements described by Marcel Mauss) beyond all recognition: “the country presents a different image in winter and in summer. In the summertime it is quiet and deserted and on holidays only builders and carpenters appear in some number. In the wintertime it is noisy and busy, when all the migrants who worked in Europe have returned. After a hard-working and sparing working period, a relatively short period of rest comes in the winter”²³.

The assessment of the importance of labour migration is neither easy nor unequivocal. Definitely, this phenomenon proves the real courage, perseverance and cleverness of the countryside inhabitants. The reaction of German scientists who anxiously reported the range of migration and its consequences defined from their prospect as *ostflucht*, i.e. the withdrawal of German elements from the East towards the West under the pressure of the Polish population, shows how massive the tendency was and what important international role it played. Weber analysed this

²¹ A. Mytkowicz, *Powstanie i rozwój emigracji sezonowej*, Publishing House of the Economic Institute N.K.N., Cracow 1917, books XX and XXI, p. 154.

²² A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Oxford University Press, London 1956.

²³ F. Bujak, *Maszkienice, wieś powiatu brzeskiego. Rozwój...*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

process in the categories of the economic displacement of Germans who were placed higher in civilisation ranks by Polish people who had low expectations of living standards²⁴.

While admitting that “none of the countries in Western Europe has such good material for settlers as Poland”²⁵, Polish scientists indicated many unfavourable consequences of such massive migration. Migrating people often underwent demoralisation, marriages split, there were a lot of diseases and accidents at work, and as a result fertility was lower and getting married at an older age resulted in the decrease in the birth rate. While assessing migration from the point of view of the whole society, also large financial losses (costs related to departure abroad), as well as indirect losses (the loss of human capital) were stressed²⁶.

But for the Polish countryside, migration (European and American even more) also produced indisputable beneficial effects, starting from indisputable financial profits (that allowed migrants to pay back debts and invest in farms)²⁷, and ending with positive changes in the sphere of mentality. “They are not peasantry of the old-time type [...] helpless and passive in general. Their breath of mind immensely broadens, and the social and touring prospect is formed thanks to the experience gained from journeys to distant countries and contacts with so many different people and relationship”²⁸.

Migrations undoubtedly contributed to progress in agriculture and the improvement of the living standard; they also influenced the individualisation of attitudes of the inhabitants and caused transfers in the social structure of the countryside. However, this fact is also reported unanimously by all the scholars, and in some specific way they maintained the traditional structure of rural life, reinforcing the importance of having the land as fundamental for living and as the main indicator of prestige. Even the factors influencing the decision of departure had nothing in common with the need to start a completely new life and an absolute change of fate. The reasons for migrating solely derived from the logic of peasant management: “they did not go to America under the influence

²⁴ See: M. Weber, *Państwo narodowe a narodowa polityka gospodarcza*, in: *Polityka jako zawód i powołanie*, Znak Social Publishing Institute, Cracow 1998, p. 179.

²⁵ Z. Ludkiewicz, *Podręcznik polityki agrarnej*, Publishing Committee of University Books at the Ministry Of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment, Warsaw 1932, p. 242.

²⁶ See: A. Jarzyna, *Polityka emigracyjna*, Polish Book Publishing House, Warsaw 1933, p. 7.

²⁷ W. Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, Literary Institute, Paris 1964, Vol. I, p. 190.

²⁸ F. Bujak, *Maszkienice, wieś powiatu brzeskiego. Rozwój..., op. cit.*, p. 106.

of innovative social aspirations. They went there to buy another cow, to build a barn or to pay off their brother or sister”²⁹.

The strong influence of traditions and habits of the rural community also influenced the life of an emigrant to America. Still he was under the control of his family and neighbours and did not stop feeling like a member of this group. The letters that have already been mentioned here many times carried actual information, gossip and instructions. It was not rare that a relative and a parish circle, which was a smaller imitation of the village, was recreated after emigration³⁰. Emigration also roused patriotic and civic attitudes, increasing the interest in the problems of the whole village and not only of the closest family members. Collective actions for the benefit of the local community were undertaken, various initiatives and functioning of local institutions were financially supported and pressure was exerted to preserve tradition³¹.

Those migrants who went to work on farms on the other side of the ocean (like for example in Canada) proved to be extremely resistant to the modernising influence of those who employed the latest types of management and who with obduracy stuck to the traditional peasant philosophy of cultivating everything in a little amount and for their own needs. However, it did not necessarily have only negative results. It allowed them to protect themselves from hunger in the period of economic crisis, when farm production for sale temporarily decreased³².

Travelling across the ocean did not result in negligence of traditional moral standards. Observance of the principles that certified the family status of an independent farmer-manager, even if he was too rich, was still controlled.

Also, after the emigrant came back home, his life did not change radically³³. Strong conformity was marked for example in clothing. Immediately after arrival to the village, American clothes, which could be seen in the photos that were shown to neighbours, were put into a chest

²⁹ K. Duda-Dziewierz, *Wieś małopolska a emigracja amerykańska. Studium wsi Babica powiatu rzeszowskiego*, Polish Sociological Institute, Warsaw-Poznań 1938, p. 85.

³⁰ Compare the description of such a copy-village built in the USA in: R. Kantor, *Między Zaborowem a Chicago. Kulturowe konsekwencje istnienia zbiorowości imigrantów z parafii zaborowskiej w Chicago i jej kontaktów z rodzimymi wsiami*, Ossolineum, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow 1990.

³¹ *Ibid.*; also see: M. Wieruszewska-Adamczyk, *Przemiany społeczności wiejskiej. Zaborów po 35 latach*, IRWiR Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 1978.

³² See: K. Romaniszyn, *Chłopi polscy w Kanadzie (1896–1939)*, IRWiR Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 1991, p. 50.

³³ See: K. Duda-Dziewierz, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

and the people wore clothes accepted by the environment. The situation was similar in case of food and methods of management³⁴.

What conclusion can emerge from the study of the phenomenon that breaking the isolation of the village and allowing its inhabitants to set off and travel to the wide world finally ties them even stronger with their primary environment and traditional way of life? It seems that we should interpret it as a manifestation of social resourcefulness that makes it possible to join “the game for adaptation” with the “game for authenticity”. The range of this resourcefulness may be described as impressive, thus proving the potential of the human capital and individual entrepreneurship begun by it. The second sphere, in which we can observe similar regularities, is professional extra-agricultural activity by the inhabitants of the countryside.

Domestic Craft and Village Enterprises

The popular idea that at the turn of the 20th century the Polish village was inhabited only by people who worked in land cultivation is groundless. In the middle of the 19th century, still before bestowing the property, the Polish village was inhabited by people who were subject to serfdom but also peasants who had their own farms as well as landless peasants³⁵. Craft manufacture was flourishing even at that time³⁶.

The studies of the social and professional structure carried out before World War II showed that although among the rural population independent farmers dominated (70%), hired workers employed in agriculture and non-farming workers (white-collar workers, labourers, pensioners and village entrepreneurs) were also present³⁷. On each farm, apart from the land cultivation and stock-breeding, people worked in the domestic industry for their own needs. Regular money making from a craft was practised more often depending on the size of the farm (in up to 86% of tiny farms – up to 2 ha – farming was just a marginal occupation; in small farms – up to 5 ha – it was like that in 73% of

³⁴ See: K. Zawistowicz-Adamska, *Spoleczność wiejska. Doświadczenia i rozważania z badań terenowych w Zaborowie*, Polish Institute of Social Services, Łódź 1948, p. 69.

³⁵ See J. Kochanowicz, *Pańszczyźniane gospodarstwo chłopskie w Królestwie Polskim w pierwszej połowie XIX*, Publications of the University of Warsaw, Warsaw 1981.

³⁶ J. Supiński, *Szkola polska gospodarstwa społecznego*, Ossolineum, Lwów 1862, Vol. I, p. 320.

³⁷ K. Bentlewska, *Wiejscy procederzyści, renciści oraz pracownicy umysłowi i fizyczni o stałych uposażeniach*, in: E. Strzelecki et al. (eds.), *Struktura społeczna wsi polskiej*, “Sprawy Agrarne” 1937, No. 1, p. 257.

cases³⁸). The variety of those occupations was large, and particular villages could be referred to as multifunctional. At the top of the hierarchy carpentry was found and weaving was also very popular. Almost every village, or at least every parish, had a few blacksmiths, shoemakers, a wheeler, a cooper, a saddler; people worked in furriery, hats were sewn, gloves were made, baskets were caned, there were bakers, butchers and barber-surgeons. There were also potters, drapers, gravediggers, carpenters, bricklayers and whitesmiths.

Some villages even became specialised industrial and craft centres. And so for example in the Żmiąca village even at the end of the 18th century a steelwork, where they produced china, bottles and thick glasses for windows, existed³⁹. Then, the village of Świątniki Górne from the Cracow land district became a typical craft village even in the 19th century because the majority of its inhabitants worked in padlock production. Three workshops functioned here and each of them gave employment to 10 to 40 workers, 50 small factories and a locksmith's school were operating. The school graduates could easily find work even in Budapest, Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, and France. Merchants from Świątniki travelled with their goods to Hungary and Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Austria and the Balkans, and after the World War I they controlled the market in Poland⁴⁰.

In smaller villages joining a few skills was a rule because one trade did not give enough income. However, many times joining farming with a marginal activity was not caused by an insufficient level of income obtained from the farm but by a well-considered concept (which nowadays we would call a business plan) and the conscious decision of an entrepreneur who was prospering well⁴¹.

Obviously, just like in the case of migration, all additional income was considered by smaller and larger village entrepreneurs only to complement the income from the farm and the financial surplus was firstly assigned to buy more land, which sometimes might have played a decisive role. Therefore, the cases in which craftsmen returned to farming after they had saved some money were not rare⁴². Moreover, the inhabitants of suburban villages who even neglected the cultivation of

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ F. Bujak, *Żmiąca, wieś powiatu limanowskiego. Stosunki gospodarcze i społeczne*, Gebethner and Company, Cracow 1903, p. 109.

⁴⁰ W. Kwaśniewicz, *Wiejska społeczność rzemieślnicza w procesie przemian*, Ossolineum, Wrocław–Warsaw 1970.

⁴¹ See: F. Guściora, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

⁴² See: *Ibid.*, p. 83.

land in the period of prosperity in industry did not dispose of the land and in the period of crisis they started farming again.

This fact of persistence of peasants regarding land extremely intrigued the authors who wrote about the countryside. It was interpreted (and still it is interpreted) as the manifestation of a “psychosis of possession”⁴³, or “the expression of inheritance of the farming profession”⁴⁴. However, we can suggest one more explanation. The possession of land is the “provision for the future and independence, somehow it is a savings bank. The major maintenance base for the farmer is his work both in his own farm and in other people’s farms (enterprises), but the possession of land is the guarantee for the farmer that in case of periodic or temporary shortage of work he will be able to survive and protect himself against the lowering of the price of his work”⁴⁵. A piece of land was for the farmer’s family “the only provision for older age, or in case of unemployment or the premature death of the father of the family”⁴⁶.

It is obvious that very reasonably calculated reasons lay at the foundation of the attachment to the land, especially because other possibilities to invest surplus money were not too attractive. When analysing the phenomenon described as the attachment to land we ought to pay attention to one factor. Managing a tiny farm, and such farms were predominant, at best gave a very modest maintenance for the family members and only exceptionally provided the means for investing in its development (not mentioning the payment of taxes). Aiming at the expansion and intensification of production, the farmer needed to have additional sources of financing it, and undertaking circumstantial employment on the premises, seasonal migrations and particularly leaving for the USA for several years served that. The scale of income gained from other sources was large considering the conditions of the Polish countryside. For example, for the village of Maszkienice, Bujak calculated this amount for the turn of the 20th century at the minimum of 12,000 zlotys a year, while the income from the land and household was 10,000 zlotys at maximum (for the whole village) in the same period⁴⁷.

What conclusions can be drawn from the above review of various forms of entrepreneurship developed by the farmers who looked for

⁴³ K. Górlach, *Chłopi, rolnicy, przedsiębiorcy. “Kłopotliwa klasa” w Polsce postkomunistycznej*, Publishing House of Jagiellonian University, Cracow 1995.

⁴⁴ F. Bujak, *Maszkienice, wieś powiatu brzeskiego. Stosunki...*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ F. Bujak, *Maszkienice, wieś powiatu brzeskiego. Rozwój...*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴⁶ K. Bentlewska, *op.cit.*, p. 276.

⁴⁷ F. Bujak, *Maszkienice, wieś powiatu brzeskiego. Rozwój...*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

additional sources of income without leaving their village? Similar to migration, it ought to be stressed that the cleverness, creativity and diligence of farmers is impressive. Often forced by the extreme necessity of life, motivated by the will of promotion in the village social hierarchy and the need to secure the future of their children, they took up various activities and professions. Doing this, they proved not only their resourcefulness and a sense of economy (the reasonable joining of complementary undertakings), but they equally well competed with more experienced entrepreneurs from cities.

Activities were usually initiated with the thought of staying in the village. Therefore, the traditional form of life not only turned out not to be an obstacle to undertaking new challenges but it even motivated them to act. Strengthening the position in the community and not the contestation of the standards operating there or even breaking all the ties with the community was to be the result of all the efforts. Certainly such behaviours deserve to be called ethos and they carry out the principles of both “the game for adaptation” and “the game for authenticity”. The regularities observed so far suggest the need to consider in the study of the aspects of entrepreneurship (individual and social) the fundamental fact that it came out of the needs and values of rural life and it was also targeted at it. Therefore, the analysis of particular examples of social entrepreneurship in the first half of the 20th century has to be accompanied by the awareness that they became possible thanks to migration and aspirations that were awoken by versatile professional activity which was still focused on the farm, and because of that, in their shape, they were conditioned by the traditional standards of a rural community.

3. Social Entrepreneurship in the Countryside

Bestowing the property that placed the peasant in a direct relationship not with the farm’s owner, who mainly demanded the benefits in kind, but with the state that collected taxes caused the necessity of converting farms into the money economy. The intensification of production became the fundamental target for them. Mass participation of peasants in parcelling out land property (money brought from emigration made it possible to buy land but at the same time this caused a significant increase in prices) served that. There also appeared the demand for cooperative institutions as well as credit and trade ones that were to provide services to developing agriculture. While joining such common enterprises,

general intentions that included contributing to the social, cultural and civilisation progress of the countryside, the development of the individual and others were formed alongside with economic targets.

The question of the change of the attitude of the countryside inhabitants towards collective actions was much worse. With respect to this, the heritage of villein service did a lot of durable wrong to the Polish countryside. Nevertheless, although it demanded special endeavours and conditions, it was possible even here to realise the intentions. First of all, it could happen thanks to the respect the initiators of such undertakings (local authorities) had, and, what is equally important, as a result of tactics skilfully employed by those people, that certified that they were people “deeply submerged in their culture” which was stressed by Brigitte Berger mentioned above. The examples of these types of perspicacity and skilful behaviour are provided, among others, by Witos’s diaries, and particularly by the story of the road widening in the farmstead of Dwudniaki⁴⁸. It is an instructive, even model example of “soft” social engineering, which is made in such a way that it does not ridicule people, does not criticise existing customs, does not impose strange models of behaviour, but instead refers to the principles accepted by the environment and can guess the partners’ expectations.

Development of Institutions in the Countryside

The need and possibilities to form organisations among Polish peasants appeared only after villein service was abolished, that is after personal independence and land property was guaranteed. For the formation of peasants’ organisations among farmers, it was also necessary to acknowledge the legitimacy of social organisations by the annexing countries and the appearance of activists and awakening of interests among the peasants.

The first circles of peasants came into existence on the territory annexed by Prussia in the 1860s, in territories annexed by Austria in the 1880s and in the territory annexed by Russia on the turn of the 20th century. Right before the World War I it was respectively 15%, 9% and 4% of the total number of peasants in each of the annexed territories⁴⁹. Farm partnerships such as credit and commercial cooperatives, village shops, parcelling out cooperatives and diaries were founded in direct relationship

⁴⁸ See: W. Witos, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–222.

⁴⁹ W. Bronikowski, *Drogi postępu chłopa Polskiego*, National Scientific Institute of Farms, Warsaw–Puławy 1934.

with the circles. Activity of various types of banks that most often referred to Schulze's (later the so-called Stefczyk's bank) and Raiffeisen's banks included around 30% of Polish farms in the territory annexed by Prussia, over 25% of farms in the territory annexed by Austria and more than 10% of farms in the territory annexed by Russia. Among commercial initiatives, the "Rolniki" of Father Wawrzyńczak, which were founded on the territory annexed by Prussia since 1900 ought to be mentioned. On average there were two such companies in every magistrate district, but after the war majority of them fell into decline⁵⁰. On the territory annexed by Austria, village shops mainly directed to compete with Jewish trade were rapidly developing (before World War I there were about 3,000 of them, but because of the lack of loans, insufficient skills of the organising parties and quite often the fraud of salesmen only 476 of them survived). Also the development of dairies was not too intense (before 1914–109). On the territory annexed by Russia dairy cooperative societies functioned well (177 before the war).

The period after the war was characterised by the consolidation of dispersed activities and the unification of various organisational forms, adapted to former, significantly differentiated conditions. In 1927 there existed over 3,500 credit cooperative societies that associated about 1 million members. It was almost equal to 20% of all the farms in the country. Commercial cooperative societies made 782 entities and concentrated about 111,000 members (2.7% of all the farms belonged to them). There were 1,142 federative dairy cooperative societies and they had nearly 169,000 members (which made 5.1% of farms)⁵¹.

The need to develop economic activity as well as compliance with the principles of Christian morality, bringing up in the spirit of national solidarity, shaping of characters, aspiration for independence, support for initiatives that aim at public utility (building of hospitals, churches, schools) and the awakening of patriotism (Małopole cooperative banks made and provided equipment for 2,000 Polish Legions) were stressed in the statutes of organisations, associations and cooperative societies. Therefore, without exaggerating we can state that the cooperative movement, apart from gaining economic results, was also a "perfect school of civic and public life in the countryside"⁵².

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵¹ T. Kłapkowski, *Spółdzielczość w rolnictwie polskim*, National Scientific Institute of Farms, Warsaw 1929.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 257.

Now that we have analysed the activities related to social entrepreneurship in the whole country, it is time to characterise them more precisely in the local sphere. In order to do this, we shall refer to descriptions of several villages in which such types of enterprises were undertaken, that is, the initiatives realised with the participation of a wider number of participants and intended for the benefit of the total population. Special emphasis will be placed on the following elements: the initiator, circle of his co-workers (or sometimes only the executors of his plans), types of institutions brought into existence and the sequence of their appearance, formulated targets, methods of work (especially the use of traditional social capital). If we attempted to provide a provisional typology of quoted case studies, we could define Lisków as an example illustrating the role of a single authority (Father Bliziński), Handzlówka as a model image of activities of a local elite and Zaborów as an example of the activity of a collective actor, that is the village that was subject to the influence of migration.

Case Studies

Lisków

Almost since the beginning of the 20th century Lisków in the Kalisz Voivodeship has been a generally accepted example of a “perfect village”, in which the local community was stimulated and with their engagement it was possible to realise a lot of plans that bring profit to all the inhabitants. The arrival of Waław Brzeziński, the priest who came from Warsaw, in this neglected village⁵³ in 1900 was the turning point. The methodical work of the rural parson who wanted to do best for his parishioners started gradually to bring results, although “the conditions at that time were very bad”⁵⁴ – road transport to nearby villages, ignorance (87% illiteracy), loose social and family ties as a result of the vicinity of Prussia and opportunities for migration to make money, the distrustful attitude of local manor-houses, and the unfavourable attitude of the occupants.

The first idea was to open a small shop because the authorities would not have agreed to establish an association. This partnership shop became the “mother of other institutions” and in fact played the role of a tavern

⁵³ See: M. Moczyłowska, *Wieś Lisków na podstawie wiadomości zebranych na miejscu*, “Gazeta Kaliska”, 1913; A. Chmielińska, *Wieś polska Lisków w ziemi kaliskiej*, “Gospodarz” Association, Lisków 1925.

⁵⁴ W. Bliziński, *Działalność spółdzielni i organizacji rolniczych w Liskowie*, Association of Farming Cooperative Societies, Warsaw 1928.

and peasants' club, giving the inhabitants the "possibility to bring up other problems that made the life in the village easier". The next investment was a bakery, in which the baker received, apart from his salary, two kilograms of bread every day. Then, farming and the trading cooperative society and the mill (the steam one since 1916) came into existence, and in 1911 – after two years of persuasion – a dairy cooperative society, that, at the beginning had nine members (the priest, parish organist, the landowner and five farmers), but after a month it already had eighteen members. At the end of the 1920s it comprised 1220 members and had nine branches; also, mutual cow insurance was introduced.

Convincing Polish peasants to intensify milk production was, which we do not fully realise nowadays, a real revolution with both economic and cultural consequences. Because the cows had been bred before mainly for manure which was necessary to fertilise the land, the small amount of milk given by a badly raised cow was treated as a by-product, which, if it had not been used for one's own needs, was sold and made the farmer's wife's income. The chance to make additional and quite considerable income from the possessed cow convinced the peasants to invest in its maintenance but at the same time caused the change in the moral pattern of the division of the farm into a woman's and man's part. The wife had to share the income from the sale of milk, which started to be regular and considerable at that time, with her husband⁵⁵.

Since 1910 Stefczyk's purse and a separate purse for children have existed in Lisków. Then a constructional cooperative society, a brickyard and concrete production plant were set up, the Community House was built (although Father Bliziński had to bring an action against parishioners for the land on which the house was built, and the proceedings at law lasted for several years), as well as a steam bath and nursing home for elderly people. The Fire Brigade, Agricultural Association and Associations of Farmers' Wives that ran orphanages started their activity too. Lisków was also famous for schools (since 1913 an agricultural one that offered a five-month farming courses, a dairy one that mainly attracted young people from border areas and a craft and industrial one that trained ironworkers, mechanics and toy-producers; they organised courses in fashion, sewing, embroidery, rug-making, weaving and housework, mainly for visitors from outside Lisków). In 1920 the local orphanage changed into orphan-asylum with its own hospital and dental care. In Lisków an amateur theatre and a choir were operating; lotteries, nativity plays and various

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

actions were organised, which raised money to support the funds of educational and tutorial institutions.

All these impressive accomplishments were mainly achieved because of the parson's initiative, his tireless energy and patience. As he used to write, the condition for success in the social work that he undertook in Lisków was first of all the personal dedication of the animator, persistent work with and for the people, exclusion from politics and attracting women. Father Bliziński convinced himself very quickly that "in general, a woman has a significant influence on her husband and family". When he worked only with men, their wives, as he remembered, even terrorised their husbands who came back home late from meetings. Therefore, peasants started to leave the cooperative society. Only after women had been invited to cooperate was the activity of the society activated because the women started taking initiative themselves and they also demanded activity from their husbands.

Lisków was a kind of verification for the well-known proverb that says that the most difficult thing is just about to begin. Father Bliziński made his parishioners aware that realised investments not only bring a direct economic benefit but also contribute to the development of infrastructure and enterprises of a social and cultural character.

In spite of numerous successful undertakings in Lisków, their unequivocal assessment is not easy. Nobody denied Father Bliziński's achievements at work or measurable results represented by functioning institutions. However, there were doubts related to something else. The question of to what extent those achievements could be attributed only to the priest's activity and to what extent the inhabitants contributed to them was asked. A closer look at the situation there led to the following diagnosis: "All that we look at with admiration in Lisków, as Stefania Bojarska who went to the villages in all three annexed territories wrote, only proves the large amount of energy and almost inexhaustible capital of Bliziński's optimism. All the appliances, which could be judged by intelligent peasants as visitors to Lisków from various parts of the country, unfortunately have only one fault: they did not grow out of the collective thirst of parishioners from Lisków – it was as if they were a 'godsend', and this can be seen with blinding brightness to everybody who can observe the phenomena of social nature"⁵⁶.

Therefore, Father Bliziński has been described by the author in the following way: it is the work of an idealist of a conservative tendency

⁵⁶ S. Bojarska, *Nasz dorobek kulturalny*, Family Chronicle, Warsaw 1916, Vol. III – *Królestwo Polskie*, p. 248.

and a noble philanthropist. That is the work based on individual work and a concept, and accomplished by this individual, without this socialising and highly democratic element, that is the cooperation of neighbours from the closest surroundings”⁵⁷.

Thus, the replacement of authentic rank-and-file activity by a social worker’s activity of the parson did not stimulate the social capital of the inhabitants, which meant that everything that managed to be created in the village was at risk of falling together with the retirement of the promoter of changes.

The convictions of Lisków observers about the disadvantages of true social life was confirmed by the fact that this “‘ideal village’ contributed to the growth of the level of socialising and culture of the closest surroundings and the Lisków population to a higher level in a very small extent but worked with contagious good example well-known from the description and telling the stories all over the country”⁵⁸. Therefore, Lisków was a training ground for the activists and instructors to gain experience rather than a real model village in which it was possible to move social capital and stimulate the civic behaviours of the inhabitants.

Another objection referred to the shape of Lisków, its appearance and specificity. According to Bojarska, because of the institutions accumulated there, which sometimes were even more useful to visitors from outside than the local people, it was not only the village, but something in-between the traditional village and an industrialised town of the industrial settlement type that additionally did not bring positive aesthetic impressions. Therefore, the author warned against the uncritical imitation of this model.

The example of Lisków interpreted in this way shall therefore be rather a kind of warning against bringing into effect, in village areas, the ambitious ideas brought from outside and forced into the local community thanks to the dedication of animators or, at present, thanks to the acquisition of some funds from the distribution list. Social entrepreneurship artificially stimulated, and not resulting from the possibilities or aspirations of local environment, shall the least lead to the creation of a specific type of Potiomkin village.

Handzlówka

The state that is totally different from Lisków is shown by the example of the Handzlówka village from the magistrate district of Łańcut.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 250–251.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

Although here equally large merits for its development are also attributed to the priest (Władysław Krakowski), he did not find idle land but well-prepared grounds and he could support actions undertaken by the local people – he did not have to initiate them himself or even convince resistant individuals. Franciszek Magryś, who performed duties of the municipal man of letters for 40 years, was the true founding father, the initiator of undertakings and animator of the local community. Before Father Krakowski came to Handzlówka in 1889, Magryś had acted there for 15 years. He made himself known to the inhabitants while writing letters to their relatives in the army or while organising rosary associations together with them. As a firm adversary of drunkenness, Magryś was also the initiator of the action that aimed at discouraging the peasants from visiting the tavern right after Sunday mass.

Because the previous parson of Handzlówka fell ill with epilepsy, at the meeting of the local council Magryś put forward a suggestion to send a delegation to the bishop with a request to appoint a new priest for the village. Then, as one of the delegates, he went to Przemyśl, and as a result of that soon a new priest, Władysław Krakowski, came to the village. After Krakowski had recognised local relationships he suggested running the school. Again, Magryś had to persuade the insubordinates, but soon the school started its work in an old cottage renovated by the community. A lot of men of great worth and activists graduated from that school: Jan Sobek, the member of parliament from peasant party, who contributed to the foundation of the farming association, a shop, a dairy and joint company bank and also distinguished himself by arranging a reading room for young people and motivated them to social work; Walenty Rajzer, the older brother in rosary associations, the chairman in the shop and the dairy; Jan Lenar, the founder of fire brigade and its commander-in-chief; Jan Rajzer – the shopkeeper and organiser of the training for the farmers' wives, which was run by the nuns.

The foundation of the farming association was another Magryś's initiatives. He understood the value of that institution. He convinced the rural council to buy the building for the Community House and then he went to Father Krakowski to discuss the foundation of the association. The priest supported this initiative while preaching from the pulpit⁵⁹. Just like in Lisków, the women were at the beginning reluctant towards their husbands' activity in the association so Magryś also organised regular

⁵⁹ F. Magryś: *Żywot chłopca-działacza*, "Library of History and Culture of the Village, Lwów 1932, Vol. 1, p. 197.

meetings for them. After a few years, at the women's initiative, their own farming association was founded.

In 1901 Father Krakowski suggested founding the Raiffeisen purse (later called Stefczyk's purse). This time Magryś also started campaigning and, in spite of hard beginnings, the purse began to operate. It was similar to the launch of the farming association's shop, the building of a new Community House, church, presbytery and stone bridges.

The most exhausting and difficult idea was to build a new church, which was claimed by Father Krakowski because the old wooden church from the 19th century was already devastated. Therefore, the meeting of the whole rural borough was called but the arguments and persuasions did not work that time. Some people were against that idea and some others did not approve of the suggested location. Magryś did not give in and continued agitation until he succeeded. The construction that was started lasted for several years. Father Krakowski died in this period and the building was finished by his successor – 9 years after the construction started.

After World War I finished the activity of local institution began again. Magryś did not allow hiring the shop that belonged to the association and made the new parson, church warden and a few landlords place high shares to make the shop that was destroyed by war start working again. After a period of complete failure, the dairy was also raised. In addition, the peasant theatre which Franciszek Pieniążek, the teacher of the local school, was involved in running, started working again.

Magryś's activity was not only limited to organisational work but many times it took a material and financial form. In order to express thanks to Magryś for his engagement in activities for the benefit of the home village, a park was named after him, and in 1928 he received the Silver Order of Merit from the President of the Polish Republic, Ignacy Mościcki. At the end of his diary he wrote the following: "I don't think that I have done something extraordinary that could not have been done by somebody else. Certainly, every person, born even in the worst conditions, can become beneficial to the surrounding community if only they want to work on themselves and do not dispose of their deep moral principles and belief in God that they inherited from their mothers, then they may form the character and strong will, can find their true goal and only then they become a real person"⁶⁰.

Thus, Franciszek Magryś was a quiet but generally respected inhabitant of the village who took part in the life of local community

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

for many decades. Good relations with his neighbours allowed him to influence the public opinion not only at official occasions and appearances but he also never ignored any chance of agitation for every important initiative. Magryś could explain, convince and speak as he was a publicist and poet. He could also act: at once, if it was necessary but he also gathered patience if the problem required the long and systematic “shaping” of the people or waited for the right time. Magryś’s activity was not limited to the village territory. He was well-known, respected and had a lot of contacts in the magistrate district or even higher and many times he influenced what was happening in nearby villages. He skilfully mediated between the local and outside local level, owing to which he successively concluded important and difficult matters.

Magryś did not act on his own. He had a lot of colleagues who undoubtedly formed the Handzlówka elite: together they founded new institutions, entered various committees and companies, and each of them performed several functions in social, economic and cultural institutions. The career of an activist was based in their case also on moving from one form of activity to enterprises undertaken in other fields. A group of young people who were trained by them and who were supposed to be the local leaders in the future gathered around those activists. They were not secluded within the borders of their home village or particular chauvinists but many times they supported social initiatives in neighbouring towns and helped realise the investment there. They could also act efficiently after they moved to the new surroundings: “they emigrated from the villages into Przemyśl’s surrounding territories to make their lives better, and as I heard, in their new residence they also worked for social benefit”⁶¹. Magryś and people related to him were mobile: they freely moved between Cracow, Lvov and Przemyśl, bravely and without any complexes they associated with people of various ranks (earls, politicians and academicians). Organisations and institutions that came into existence through their efforts further developed themselves independently and after a few years they generated new organisations (the case of the farming association of women).

The methods of operation by means of which the activists and ordinary inhabitants of Handzlówka carried out the tasks they had to complete connected a modern orientation in operating legal regulations with rational economic calculation. They also used numerous acquaintances and blood-ties, which were a source of information, advice and aid. At the

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

same time, they referred to traditional forms of disinterested services for the benefit of the community, for example letting a room in their house or school to the priest for free or allowing the room to be used for a meeting or for doing unpaid work, which significantly reduced the costs of the carried out investments.

The arguments used by the peasants-activists when they wanted to convince the people in their surroundings to carry out their intentions were interesting: first of all they mentioned the necessity to improve the culture in the village, criticised the poverty and social pathologies, emphasising the progress in agriculture. All the time, stronger reasons, that is the need to work on oneself, the moral improvement of an individual, the principles of Christian faith and patriotic feelings were presented in their texts. Undoubtedly, those matters were not only an ornament for ordinary bustle but they also effectively stimulated everyday work, providing it with pathos and some type of transcendent dimension.

Krakowski, the priest who was a newcomer from outside, had first of all the background or complimentary role in all these. When he died, life went on, and everything proceeded in the same way. When the new parson came, he was immediately involved in all the things that had not been completed by his predecessor and he continued running them, in the way almost dictated by the local community.

Zaborów

The Małopolska village of Zaborów, which is located not far from Brzesko, is an example of another mechanism of the development of social entrepreneurship different from the cases discussed above. American emigration concentrated in Chicago strongly influenced all local enterprises especially after World War I. In 1937, when the Institute of Social Economy (*Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego*) directed by Ludwik Krzywicki started studies on emigration, there were about one hundred families from Zaborów living across the ocean, not including newcomers from nearby villages who were included in the parish of Zaborów.

Traditions of migration of this area were typical of Galicia and their intensity was very strong, which is proven by the fact that Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska, who conducted a survey on the premises, did not find a single farm from which at least one member was not staying abroad⁶². From the 1880s a large number of people went to Prussia and

⁶² See: K. Zawistowicz-Adamska, *Spoleczność wiejska. Doświadczenia i rozważania z badań terenowych w Zaborowie*, Polish Institute of Social Services, Łódź 1948.

Denmark for seasonal work in the fields, and around the year 1890 people from Zaborów discovered the USA and Canada. After they had returned, the “Americans” became the elite of the village: they established farms of a standard value, took part in social life, and occupied important functions in the local environment. They also ran three shops in Zaborów⁶³.

However, it should not be assumed that the area of Zaborów would be a blank spot on the map of social activity without the American experience. Just like in the whole Galicia from the end of 19th century in the villages of the Zaborów parish there appeared benefit-and-loan purses, farming associations, sections of fire brigades as well as groups of Peasant School Associations and later amateur theatrical groups were formed. The first performance was arranged in 1904 during the celebrations of the January Uprising and before World War I several dozens of performances were organised. Jędrzej Cierniak, the most distinguished graduate from the local school and later a graduate of the Jagiellonian University, was the spirit of the theatrical movement there.

From the beginning of the 20th century the Zaborów village was the leader in the area if we consider the inhabitants’ activity (in 1905 the fire brigade was founded, in 1912 Stefczyk’s purse was established and then a water company that served several nearby villages). After World War I a lot of organisations such as farming associations, Stefczyk’s purses and voluntary fire brigades were revived, and in the 1926 Dairy Cooperative Society and the Association of Rural Youth were founded, a few schools and Community House with libraries and reading rooms where rural activists started their activity were built.

What were the characteristics of Zaborów emigration that played such an important role in the life of the home village? What influenced the inhabitants staying across the ocean so much and what spheres of life was, first of all, the aid from abroad mainly directed to?

Migrants from Zaborów did not scatter among the whole of peasant emigration from Poland, but they organised themselves according to the principle of regional origin quickly and permanently, while founding numerous clubs, the main statutory task of which was to keep contact with family villages and provide them with financial help⁶⁴. As far as making the decision to journey abroad could have been recognised as a manifestation of individual entrepreneurship, the migrants’ ability to organise themselves with regard to emigration certainly should be

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁶⁴ M. Gliwicówna, *Drogi emigracji*, “Przegląd Socjologiczny”, 1936, book 3–4, p. 55.

treated as the proof of the existence of social entrepreneurship, i.e. one that even on foreign territory derives (successfully) the forms of cooperation from traditional social capital and from the family environment.

The vast majority of Zaborów residents who came to the United States at the end of the 19th century settled in the area of the so-called Polish Downtown in Chicago, creating a classical ethnic ghetto⁶⁵. In this way, thanks to the spacious concentration of emigrants from the same areas, the “substitutes of family places” were created and then associations and regional clubs were founded⁶⁶.

The first organisations of Chicago emigrants from Małopolska started to appear in 1915 and they were intended to help the villages that suffered during the Russian offensive in Galicia. Even in March 1917 the Emergency Association of Pojawie and Zaborów was constituted. At organisational meetings, fee dues amounted to 26.5 dollars. After that, smaller and larger sums were sent to the country to support those in need⁶⁷. However, almost at the same time disagreements appeared because the interests of both villages could not always be brought together. As a result, clubs that concentrated on cooperation with one specific village started to emerge.

From the initiative of emigration, in 1920 two brickyards appeared in Zaborów, the income from which was meant for constructing church. Both brickyards became independent of Chicago control very soon and started to be controlled by the community board. They worked efficiently for many years stimulating the construction movement in the whole neighbourhood and providing employment to many people. In 1922 a project to build the Community House started to be considered, in 1923 the “Chicago Daily” was subscribed in order to be sent to the country for the members of Peasant Youth Association that was founded in Zaborów a year before. Polish diasporas financed the purchase of equipment for the fire brigade and founded a scholarship fund for one of the students from a secondary school in Zaborów. In spring 1939 a collection of funds for rearming the Polish Army was announced. Earlier, in 1926, the idea of constructing Community House had been revived. In 1929 the president of the Chicago Association of Zaborów Village Citizens came to Poland and details of the investment were agreed. “Zaborów inhabitants in Chicago declared that they would cover the expenses for the purchase of the square and building materials,

⁶⁵ See: R. Kantor, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁶⁶ See: *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶⁷ R. Kantor: *op. cit.*, p. 80.

as well as manage the construction and do all the manual and horse workmanship without payment”⁶⁸. The investment cost the “Americans” 7,000 dollars (around 44,000 zlotys at that time).

The Community House was spacious and modern so the whole village was proud of such a place. The “Americans” participated in successive costs related to the furnishing of the library, the subscription of magazines for the reading room, the purchase of a radio receiver, etc. Club delegations came to Poland. After they had left, impressions were shared, reports were made about the work’s progress and photographs were seen.

The contact between emigrants and family villages did not only have a formal character, that is via Polish institutions, but also private exchanges of letters with closer and farther family, visits to the country and support for new emigrants from Zaborów and its neighbourhood who came to Chicago were very popular⁶⁹. Thus, self-organisation at a distance referred to both individual and family activities that manifested themselves in the forms of individual entrepreneurship. It used rural social capital which demanded help that is provided collectively, for the neighbours as well as “sponsoring”, to the best of their abilities, objects that are important for the whole village (social entrepreneurship).

This co-existence, better yet – cooperation, was not free of arguments. Zaborów villages used to send requests and thanks to Chicago but also reports, and from there money, instructions for its use, and sometimes, the words of criticism arrived. They came from the difference of prospects and from the lack of knowledge of the reality of the countries. The “Americans” held indolence against their countrymen, they accused them of laziness or even dishonesty, and gradually because of becoming the labourers themselves they stopped understanding the mechanisms of rural life and the peasants’ mentality. Local activists accused the “Americans” of the lack of orientation regarding the situation in the country, underestimation of administrative limitations and lack of understanding for the difficult economic situation of the people. The cause of friction, apart from an obvious difference in prospects, also lied in the fact that the clubs and associations preferred investments of a cultural, educational and prestigious (church) character and not economic, or on at least a smaller scale. And they could, only as such, create circumstances of independent social development and increase the citizens’ engagement through the development of agriculture and strengthening the position of peasants⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁶⁹ See: K. Zawistowicz-Adamska, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁷⁰ See: R. Kantor, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

What lesson does the case of Zaborów teach us? First of all, this village is a perfect confirmation of the thesis that it is possible for a community to be integrated, in spite of a division into two parts separated by a large spacious distance. Independently of that, the bonds between the members of community (family and neighbours) are maintained, and what is more, they undergo the extension of the feeling of responsibility for the whole village and even the nation (although not necessarily for a nearby village, because it has its own emigrants). The traditional community can preserve its social capital and social entrepreneurship generated by it both in decimated (by shorter and longer departures of the inhabitants) Zaborów, and recreate and activate those resources on the other side of ocean, in Chicago. Additionally this capital is also sufficient (and it turns out to be fully productive and functional) to join both parts with a network of intense (also extra-family) contacts and relations and integrate them into one fully cooperative body. The dual structure of Zaborów “in diasporas” does not lead to the dichotomised division of roles into benefactors and benefactees; the latter at least try to repay with souvenirs, and besides the help that is provided is still perceived by both sides as a natural obligation that results from the fact of the relationship or neighbourhood.

“Chicago” not always turns out to be the active party that stimulates the activity; it often happens that two partners full of initiatives enter into arguments. The dominating role of “Chicago” results from its financial advantage and sometimes leads to imposing some of the concepts and as a consequence to the overinvestment of the infrastructure of Zaborów with buildings of a unilateral character. However, Zaborów would have undoubtedly existed or even developed in spite of the lack of protection of its “colony”, which shows the symptoms of the industrial mentality (institutions seen as the most important factor of the transformation).

4. Hypotheses

The analyses that have been made and that at the beginning included the manifestations of individual entrepreneurship (migrations for money and extra-farming sources of income), and then social entrepreneurship (formation of institutions on Polish lands, illustrated afterwards with the studies of three cases: Lisków, Handzlówka and Zaborów), give authority to formulate the hypothesis of the relationship between those two phenomena and their relation towards the capital (human and social) of the Polish countryside in the first half of the 20th century.

There are many reasons that allow to state that the human capital that was liberated after the returning of property was realised in a very dynamic individual entrepreneurship that proved to have large potential. It was directed to the development of farms and respected the principles of rural life that was defined as a form of resourcefulness that joined the “game for adaptation” with the “game of authenticity”. Therefore, it was an ethos activity and not the entrepreneurship in a narrow economic meaning. However, the development of farms that took place thanks to individual entrepreneurship encountered external barriers related to the lack of institutional surroundings. In order to prevent this, it came to the resources of human capital – community principles of mutual help and self-organisation – that while practised in a traditional form or skilfully modified gradually filled the organisational emptiness. It was a very important feature of pre-war social entrepreneurship of rural environments⁷¹.

Attributing a lot of importance not only to economic profits of the undertaken initiatives but also to the value of altruist cooperation that aimed at benefitting all the people and not only members who joined into associations or cooperative societies was another characteristics of the development of this type of entrepreneurship. At the same time, it was emphasised that cooperation in this sphere unifies the representatives of various strata (landowners, priests, intellectuals, or peasants), so it conducted the appeasement of social antagonisms. The influence of such an institution on the improvement of the level of education and moral standards of its members and all the villages, that is the socialising function and the one that strengthened human capital, was also accentuated. Finally, it was indicated that work of this type is a patriotic obligation⁷².

We cannot ignore the knowledge of how skilfully and gradually the leaders of that time got in touch with the environment. Sometimes many years passed before it was agreed that the grounds were prepared and a specified initiative started to bring results⁷³.

It was also common that not one, but successively several institutions of various profiles (not only financial or economic but also educational and cultural) that complemented each other were started. All those institutions did not limit themselves to a narrow specialisation but ran versatile activity (for example farming associations organised both professional courses, purchased fertilisers and seeds and invited speakers who gave speeches on how to raise children, fight pathologies or on

⁷¹ See: S. Bojarska, *op. cit.*, Vol. II – *Galicja*, p. 52.

⁷² *Opisy gospodarowania...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 201–209.

⁷³ See: S. Bojarska, *op. cit.*, Vol. II – *Galicja*, p. 51.

the principles of co-existence in the family, in the village and in the whole community). Of course, entertaining performances and patriotic anniversary celebrations were an important element of their activity.

So how does the relationship between those two forms of entrepreneurship and two types of capital present itself in the light of the collected data? This relationship can be summarised in the following way: individual entrepreneurship that derives profits from the resources of human capital, even if it is very dynamic and effective, is not a sufficient factor for the appearance of social entrepreneurship. For its appearance the circumstances such as the existence of need and aspirations of people who improve their workshops and aim at improving their standard of life are necessary. In the first half of the 20th century they were family-run farms and their context was the rural environment. Only then the need to initiate the actions in the sphere of social entrepreneurship started to exist. Then the existing human capital was reached, which was a better move than if they started from its depreciation and the introduction of new patterns adopted from outside. It turned out that traditional forms of cooperation and self-organisation (the social capital of the community) were not doomed to be secluded in the family, but could overcome the limitations of the local community and go beyond the circle of parish loyalty or particular interests of the community. Propaganda and rhetoric that referred to more important targets, that is civic and patriotic attitudes, were very important here.

It seems that even nowadays the resources of human capital of the Polish village are not completely ruined (although sociologists also have their shameful shares in branding and fighting the mechanisms of cooperation that were still functioning in rural communities after World War II)⁷⁴. Therefore, we can, or maybe we should, attain them also today because of the risk that is associated with unavoidable transformation of a part of Polish post-traditional peasants into modern agricultural producers. As it was shown by Franciszek Tomczak, in the USA agro-business that created perfect institutional surroundings for an American farmer also became the treadmill that badly limits real freedom, the feeling of independence and that efficiently intercepts the majority of values produced in agriculture. It even contributed to the elimination of many small family farms that could not cope with the demands of not only the free market (because in American circumstances we cannot refer to such, at least with reference to agriculture), but the pressure of

⁷⁴ D. Misiura, B. Gałęski, *Wyzysk biedoty wiejskiej przez kulaków*, Party School at KC PZPR, Department of Economic Policy, Warsaw 1954.

conglomerates that are set to maximise the profit, even at the expense of ruining the farmers. It seems that agro-business in the USA is an example of “ordinary sponging on small farming producers by other groups: supply industry, banks, transportation, trade and specialists and university experts”⁷⁵. Tomczak even asks the question of “why in such a rich country like the USA and with so many sources of social opinion was it so easy to include the farmers in the system of external business and market”⁷⁶.

Having a fresh memory of the situation in the Polish village, we can give here the following answer: American farmers allowed themselves to be subordinated to the structures of agro-business because while being such great individualists and managing such large areas (as for the Polish conditions) they had never functioned in the social environment of the village. In contrast to them, Polish peasants, rooted in the life of community and presenting a collective mentality, already had, and have again the chance to protect themselves from the sponging influence of institutional surroundings that are created by external powers, while creating them independently and on the grounds of preserved resources of rural social capital. Only on such grounds, real social entrepreneurship that forms its own structures and does not allow draining the farming production by external structures, (implanted) in the rural environment can be developed.

5. Towards a New Paradigm of Transformation

The return towards the idea of social entrepreneurship itself, preceded by several years’ interest in the notion of social capital, marks a fundamental change that has been taking place in the social sciences. It seems that a new prospect that lies in making a historical reflection, its concretisation (presenting ethnography – through re-awakening of sensitivity to details) and location has started to appear in them. The point is to pay special attention to particular vicissitudes and the present specificity of both Poland⁷⁷ and its particular regions, or even local communities⁷⁸. Those three regularities create a tendency in contemporary

⁷⁵ F. Tomczak, *Od rolnictwa do agrobiznesu. Transformacja gospodarki rolniczo-żywnościowej Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki Północnej*, Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw 2004, p. 237.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁷⁷ A. Sosnowska, *Zrozumieć zacofanie. Spory historyków o Europę Wschodnią (1947–1994)*, TRIO Publishing House, Warsaw 2004.

⁷⁸ J. Bartkowski, *op. cit.*

sociology that we can firstly call an achievement of the pre-theoretical state that is repeated, and this time realised deliberately (in situations when powerful theories of modernisation turn out to be incompliant with the Polish reality), and secondly, the achievement of a temporary state of making it non-scientific (making it non-rational; meaning a temporary resignation from an attempt to find a logical explanation for all phenomena). It corresponds to Ernest Gellner's⁷⁹ or Józef Chałasiński's concepts who emphasised that in social phenomena "there is something that we do not understand, that cannot be rationally or logically analysed and that decides about basic irrational character of fundamental sources of social life in general"⁸⁰.

And finally, the state of sociology, which is postulated here rather than described, should be defined with its repeated return to the description, to social reality (in place of the study of the phenomena of consciousness), while ignoring generalisations and reference to theories of the highest rank for some time. Particular descriptions of small fragments of reality (for example monographs) carry an important heuristic and theoretical value: they can not only verify generalisations but also falsify them. Such things happen because the microscope (just like in Anotnina Kłoskowska's metaphor) and the telescope can show the same but the microscope shows that thing more accurately⁸¹. Sometimes they show something simply different, which is much more interesting. Should sociology give up that chance and that challenge?

Considering the comments expressed incidentally towards the discipline, let us try to briefly outline the sketch of the new paradigm of transformation that appears here. Its formulation is authorised not only by the images of the Polish village from the past mentioned above but also by observations of what appears in a quite dispersed but characteristic way in the works of outstanding contemporary western authors. Francis Fukuyama's remarks saying that institutions of democracy and the market may not be suspended in normative emptiness but have to co-exist with specific cultural values are the starting point here⁸².

⁷⁹ See: E. Gellner, *Pojęcie pokrewieństwa i inne szkice o metodzie i wyjaśnianiu antropologicznym*, Universitas, Cracow 1995.

⁸⁰ J. Chałasiński, *Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w fabrycznej osadzie "Kopalnia" na Górnym Śląsku. Studium socjologiczne*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny", 1935, vol. 3, p. 44.

⁸¹ A. Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*, PWN, Warsaw 1996.

⁸² See: F. Fukuyama, *Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, Free Press, New York 1995.

Let us try to draw conclusions from Fukuyama's statements. Let us assume that David Landes was right while proving, using the example of England, that its economic success was the result of national awareness that had been developed formerly in a full and intense way⁸³. Let us also assume that Michael Albert was also right. While assessing the chances of communities that are placed against new challenges he attributes a lot of importance to egalitarian convictions and solidarity that is built on them and that characterises a more stable and socialised model of capitalism from the areas around Ren, which is opposed to the Anglo-Saxon model that is based on uncompromising competition⁸⁴. Let us also consider right Charles Hampden-Turner and Alfons Trompenaars who indicate that countries that are structured collectively (Singapore), hierarchised (Japan), centralised and with strong traditions of state control (e.g. France) report the highest economic success⁸⁵. Following this way of thinking we can formulate the following statements:

– the paradigm of transformation, which is based on liberal assumptions, should be replaced as soon as possible by the model that derives its grounds from conservative thought;

– Polish society (and the inhabitants of the village and farmers in particular) that was condemned for having an insufficient level of acceptance for liberal attitudes and discredited the symptoms of traditional mentality turns out to be predestined to economic and social success, if Polish political and opinion-forming elites do not interrupt this process with their intervention, based on false and fortunately old-fashioned rationales⁸⁶.

⁸³ See: D.S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, W.W. Norton, New York 1998.

⁸⁴ M. Albert, *Kapitalizm kontra kapitalizm*, "Signum" Publishing House, Cracow 1994.

⁸⁵ See: C. Hampden-Turner, A. Trompenaars, *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism*, Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1993.

⁸⁶ R. Kaczmarek, *Zmierzch neoliberalnego optymizmu*, "Odra" 2003, No 11; G. Soros, *The Crisis of the World Capitalism*, MUZA SA, Warsaw 1999.

Tomasz Kaźmierczak, Paulina Sobiesiak

Lisków – A Model of Local Development?¹

1. Introduction

Lisków is a village located in the Wielkopolska Voivodeship, around 35 kilometres away from Kalisz. Lisków currently serves as the headquarters of the gmina (the local government administrative level). Although the first official record of the village goes back to the 13th century, Lisków's "fifteen minutes of fame" did not occur until the early 20th century. That moment, in essence, lasted only until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. The war and then post-war changes interrupted that which had brought fame to Lisków: an unprecedented process of development, which entirely changed the village and the lives of its inhabitants. Within less than 30 years, this underdeveloped and impoverished village – which had been stagnating in the Western peripheries of territories annexed by Russia² – turned into a dynamic and prosperous community (especially considering education and the economy). It came to represent success and became a model for other Polish villages.

¹ The article is an abridged English version of the paper published in Polish as: T. Kaźmierczak, P. Sobiesiak, *Lisków: model rozwoju lokalnego*, in: T. Kaźmierczak (ed.), *Zmiana w społeczności lokalnej*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2007, pp. 73–90. Research for this work included Paulina Sobiesiak's Master's Thesis entitled *Lisków – społeczność lokalna w działaniu*, written under the direction of Jerzy Bartkowski, at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw (Editors' note).

² At that time, Poland was annexed by Prussia, Russia, and Austria, and Lisków itself was located at the edge of the territory annexed by Russia. Poland regained independence in 1918, after WWI ended.

Today, no one remembers the history of Lisków³. The fact that it has been forgotten results in part from the efforts of the communist government (from 1945 to 1989), which essentially wiped the village off the map of Poland for a number of years. Meanwhile Lisków – like other examples of local development during the partitions and the inter-war period in Poland – offers a valuable, cultural lesson. It serves as a model of collective citizenship, existing in the name of a common good. In other words, Lisków exemplifies a successfully integrated society organised around common goals.

Today, many Polish villages and towns, which are uncared for socially, economically, and culturally, stand a chance at development, just like Lisków did at the beginning of the 20th century. For this reason, it is worthwhile to return to the history of Lisków and study in detail what its success was based on.

2. The Lisków Project – Expanding the Capacity of the Local Community

Lisków's "fifteen minutes of fame" began in 1900, when a new priest came to town – Father Waław Bliziński. He described the state of Lisków then in the following way:

For every 100 shoddy huts, there was only one brick hut, with a straw roof. The rest were made of wood, thatched roofs falling in, without fences. And the hut in the worst state was the school with one classroom that was supposed to serve the entire community. The road was uneven, with many puddles, mud, and even when going to the cemetery, people could hardly get their boots out of the mud [...] the impoverished and abysmally organised economy of the church parish [...] the muddy earth offered little crops [...]. The only saving grace people had was to migrate to Prussia to find work⁴ [...] Lisków was already "famous". If it was at all possible, while travelling people would bypass it or they would sit in the wagon so that they could see the front and the back, to make sure no one stole a bundle on the way. And if something was missing in the

³ Our project "Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków" refreshed people's memories about "old" Lisków, but exclusively among those who are involved in promoting the social economy and those whom we were able to reach through our published books, brochures, documentary films and numerous performances.

⁴ This was facilitated by the fact that Prussia's border was nearby. It was about 20 kilometres away from Lisków.

neighbourhood, people would say: “Well, we know a Liskovite must have been around”⁵.

That was the starting point for the project, which Father Bliziński began and during which the Lisków community was moved into action. Although it is difficult to determine today whether the development of Lisków was fully intended and planned by the priest or whether the changes in Lisków starting in 1900 – at least to a certain extent and from a certain time – were determined by the dynamics of development itself and went beyond the expectations of the initiator. Even though it is safer to assume that the second option is a better description of events, it is important to emphasise the image of Father Bliziński that emerges from his diaries: a man who is aware of his role and of the potential of Lisków and who works consistently toward a specific goal. That goal was to mobilise the people of Lisków through education and to create conditions (e.g. economic ones) that would help in acquiring and strengthening community-oriented attitudes and skills, such as participation and cooperation.

Various thoughts and projects meandered through the priest’s mind. He walked through the village, calculating, carrying things inside him. Some thoughts were developing in his mind, which he shared quietly with his closest friends [...] He conspired with two other people about important matters, such as what the village needed most and what would be most useful to the peasants⁶.

Regardless of the extent to which the Lisków project resulted from “conscious social engineering” and from “endogenous forces”, it is worth reconstructing the project for the purposes of this discussion.

Father Bliziński began the project by developing the level of education of Lisków’s inhabitants. Between 1905 and 1907, seven informal primary schools were opened in the village. These were illegal Polish schools that taught history, the Polish language, mathematics, music, singing, and religion. The priest also organised meetings with adults, where they read “The Festive Newspaper” and “The Aurora”.

That was a crack through which the light seeped. It was the first voice, which was to disrupt the sleepy calm of the peasant masses⁷.

⁵ W. Bliziński, *Wspomnienia z mego życia i pracy*, Kalisz Association of Friends of Education, Kalisz 2003, p. 31.

⁶ W. Karczewski, *Lisków – dzieje jednej wsi polskiej*, published for the exhibit entitled “Praca i Kultura Wsi w Liskowie”, Lisków 1937, p. 31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Thanks to this work, by 1914 the level of illiteracy among the locals decreased from 87% (in 1900) to 27%. It is important to note that these activities were organised despite the constant “attention” from the Czar’s administrative officials. Furthermore, in spite of the repressive authorities of the partition, Father Bliziński’s sentence to be excommunicated to Siberia, and frequent arrests of the most active peasants, the most important organisations in Lisków began their work between 1905 and 1914, that is until the outbreak of World War I (these organisations especially flourished starting in 1905, as a result of the thaw that followed Russia’s troubles in the war with Japan).

Alongside the educational work (which went hand in hand with Father Bliziński’s promise to the locals that he wanted to “bring both heaven and bread closer to them”), Father Bliziński also began promoting the idea of cooperatives, which was completely unknown in the village, but the locals were not interested in these efforts at the beginning. In January 1902 the first cooperative institution was founded in Lisków. It was called the “Farmer’s Agricultural Trade Cooperative”, which according to Father Bliziński’s diaries “*was the mother of all institutions that followed*”⁸. A grocer’s shop was opened (which functioned illegally and in fact was the seat of the underground opposition until 1908). Farming equipment was sold. After several years, when the company had earned the trust of the locals, it was expanded to include a bakery, associations of grain producers, a brickyard, a steam windmill, and a construction company. Thanks to the initiative of the company, the farmers of Lisków had the opportunity to participate in courses organised by the Museum of Bees and Gardens in Warsaw. In addition to this, the company “*took on the responsibility of sowing culture among the people. Thus, the company did not limit its activity to the economic sphere [...], but rather functioned as a kind of social club, where people met to talk and discuss various urgent social issues facing that small village world*”⁹.

In 1902 an organisation called “Mutual Security of Grain and Straw in the Event of Fire” was founded in Lisków. According to the statutes of this organisation, “*only farmers known for their honesty will be accepted into the association*”. It was a self-help organisation, where in the case of fire its members were obliged to give the victim a sum equal to his deposit as well as gifts in kind, such as cereal or oats. However, in the

⁸ W. Bliziński, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

case of a year without a fire, the money was set aside for purchases, such as “equipment for fighting fires.”

Throughout the following years, other organisations were founded in Lisków: a Bank for Small Loans (1905, later it was called “Stefczyk’s Bank”), weaving workshops (1904)¹⁰, an Agricultural Club (1906), public baths, a launderette, toy workshops (1910), and a dairy cooperative (1911). Thanks to the Agricultural Club, the peasants “learned about agriculture”. They participated in courses that addressed various aspects of agriculture (applying fertilisers, operating machinery, gardening, etc.). The Lending and Savings Bank gave out loans on favourable terms for tools such as sieves, etc., which among other things allowed the locals to avoid “*problems associated with borrowing from neighbours*”¹¹. The prosperity of the dairy cooperative prompted the Central Agricultural Society to organise permanent courses in dairy production in Lisków (starting in 1926). Lisków became a unique, local centre of education. A School of Agriculture was founded in 1913, and a middle school in 1915, which was turned into a Teachers’ Preparation School in 1921¹². After Poland regained its independence in 1918, other educational centres were founded, including the School of Arts and Industry (1921) and the Women’s Professional School (1927). The pastor of Lisków’s parish also organised social welfare and medical care systems from scratch. He initiated a health centre and maternity care (1933). The public baths and laundrette contributed to better hygiene in the village.

After the war between Poland and the Bolsheviks in 1920, Father Bliziński established an orphanage for orphans who had come from the East. A few hundred children found shelter at that orphanage, and thanks to the Polish government and the American Red Cross a hospital and dentist’s office were added to the orphanage. Additionally, canalisation and electricity were brought to the village. Roads were built (including a permanent connection to Kalisz), and most of the buildings in the village were renovated (these buildings were already made of brick and had roofs). In 1938 Lisków had its own electrical power plant, seven artesian wells, twelve telephones, as well as fifty radio sets¹³. An Intelligentsia Club, a Rifleman’s Association, the Red Cross, a choir, and an amateur

¹⁰ Lisków’s fabrics were sent to St. Petersburg, the Caucasus, Siberia, as well as Poznań and Warsaw, among other places.

¹¹ W. Bliziński, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹² In 1926 it was moved to Słupca in the Wielkopolska Voivodeship.

¹³ *Rekordy wiejskie Liskowa*, “Liskowianin” 1938, No. 4, pp. 11–12.

theatre all functioned in Lisków from 1926. There was also a local paper entitled “Liskowianin” (“The Liskovite”), which first came out monthly and later quarterly¹⁴.

Lisków activities were centred at the People’s Home, which was built between 1906 and 1907. Weekly theatrical performances took place there. A large, well-equipped gym was also located in the People’s Home. It attracted many visitors. Father Bliziński wrote in his diary that a large group of people from Częstochowa came to Lisków in 1910, and in 1912 there was a visit from Łowicz¹⁵.

Several years later – in 1925 – the first nationally-recognised exhibit was organised in Lisków. It was entitled *A Polish Village*, and 41,000 people came to see it, including President Stanisław Wojciechowski, Prime Minister Władysław Grabski and participants of the International Agricultural Congress from England, France, and the United States. A second exhibit entitled *The Work and Culture of a Village* took place in 1937. Its goal, among others, was “to summarise the role of cooperation as a basic factor in the development of Lisków” and to inform visitors about the then 35-year-old “Farmer’s Agricultural Trade Company”. The President of Poland Ignacy Mościcki, as well as Prime Minister Sławoj-Składkowski visited this exhibit¹⁶.

Lisków became Poland’s most famous village for cooperatives and served as a model for other underdeveloped villages. Besides the above-mentioned visits, two documentary films played an important role in making Lisków popular at that time. These films about Lisków were created in the 1920s by the Film Institute of the Museum of Industry and Agriculture in Warsaw. It also created postcards and slides entitled *Lisków – An Exemplary Village* (edited in 1932). That phrase “Lisków – An Exemplary Village” played an important educational role, as seen in efforts to build “a second Lisków” in other parts of Poland: in Cienin Kościelny in the Wielkopolska Voivodeship and in the town of Mońki in the Podlaskie Voivodeship.

¹⁴ The newspaper “Liskowianin” is still published in Lisków today (there was a break from 1939 to 1993). Currently, it comes out occasionally – once a year – because of a lack in funding.

¹⁵ According to the calculations of G. Waliś (see: G. Waliś, *Model pracy społecznej i wzorowej wsi księdza Wacława Blizińskiego*, “Roczniki Kaliskie” 2002, No. 28, pp. 59–70), which were based on an analysis of local newspapers, around 7,000 people visited Lisków between 1910 and 1939 (besides the mentioned exhibits) who were interested in the phenomenon of economic development.

¹⁶ See: www.liskow.pl

The activities of Lisków also brought recognition to Father Bliziński¹⁷. After Poland regained independence in 1918, Father Bliziński was drawn into the whirlwind of politics. He was elected deputy of the House (1918-1922), and from 1918 he was also the chief of the Office of Social Welfare. During the war between Poland and the Bolsheviks, he was a member of the Advisory Board for the Security of the Nation, and in 1938 he became a senator, after being nominated by President Ignacy Mościcki¹⁸. While he was away from Lisków, Father Bliziński continued to support the interests of the village. In an unpublished performance, given by one of the inhabitants of Lisków, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the death of Father Bliziński, we read:

Friendships and acquaintances with the highest tier of national and international dignitaries at that time [during Father Bliziński's activity on the national level], helped in acquiring funding, helped us avoid the burdens of Polish bureaucracy, and facilitated the achievement of goals that otherwise Liskovites could have only dreamed of¹⁹.

Thanks to the priest's contacts, the Polish people in the USA, Canada, and Australia financially supported Lisków's investments, which calls into question the conviction that Lisków developed only through the community's activities and without external financial support.

3. Characteristics of the Lisków Project

It seems that the key to understanding the essence of the phenomenon of the Lisków project, from today's perspective, is to consider the personality and role of Father Bliziński.

The traditional interpretation is to perceive Lisków as an example of the principle role that (strong) leadership has in activating the local community and stimulating its development. For example, in the opinion of Zbigniew T. Wierzbicki, expressed during an academic discussion organised in 1993 in recognition of Lisków's 700th birthday, Father Bliziński exemplified a linking of two roles: institutional leader

¹⁷ It is necessary to add that the Church repeatedly accused Father Bliziński of carrying out actions that did not maintain a balance between "heaven" and "bread", of becoming excessively involved in social work.

¹⁸ The priest was recognised for the entirety of his work, with the most important state honours.

¹⁹ T. Trzeciński, *Prelekcje wygłoszone w kościele w Liskowie w 50-tą rocznicę śmierci księdza Blizińskiego*.

(as a pastor) and “civic” leader, the unquestioned, informal leader of the Lisków community. It should be immediately noticed that when the priest’s work was criticised, it was above all for the type of leadership that he practiced. Therefore, critics at that time reproached him for failing to motivate the peasants to engage in independent activities. In other words, these critics argued that Lisków was one man’s success story and that the priest’s work was “for the people” and not “with the people”²⁰. After two visits to Lisków in 1928 and 1937, one cooperative activist, Władysław Cholewa, wrote that “*the social level of the residents of this famous village remained far behind the material gains. [...] Everything there was organised centrally, while a strong individual stood at the top – Father Bliziński*”²¹. This argument is upheld by some current critics²².

Undoubtedly, the priest’s temper favoured these kinds of judgments. Although he wrote that “*one cannot have dictatorial inclinations in social works*”²³, in daily life his behaviour often contradicted his words. Edward Małkosza – the son of Lisków’s organ player – wrote: “*the Priest hated objections, and at times he exploded with sharp words, which he later regretted because they estranged people*”²⁴. To this day, people in Lisków remember this kind of behaviour. For example, a contemporary inhabitant of Lisków said that “*to this day stories are passed on among the older inhabitants, stories about how the Priest kept things in order, and how he functioned as [...] an institution that was well-informed and active. [...] He was very impulsive*”²⁵.

The question of how independent Lisków’s inhabitants actually were is controversial. What is more, it will probably remain undecided because nowadays it seems impossible to clarify. However, it is important to remember that in the initial phases of the project (which were essential

²⁰ See: W. Majdański, *ks. Wacław Bliziński – proboszcz z Liskowa*, “Słowo Powszechne” 1971, No. 4, p. 145; M. Biernacka, *Oświata w rozwoju kulturowym wsi polskiej*, Ossoliński National Institute, Wrocław 1984, p. 47; R. Wojciechowski, *Lisków – wieś czy miasto*, “Kurier Poranny” 1937, No. 83; S. Gajewski: *Udział duchowieństwa w pracy społecznej w Królestwie Polskim 1905–1918*, Lublin Catholic University Publishers, Lublin 1990, p. 164; W. Bzowski, *Wieś polska i wieś czeska*, Warsaw 1921, p. 16.

²¹ W. Cholewa, *Moja walka o spółdzielczość wiejską*, in: *Wspomnienia działaczy spółdzielczych*, Warsaw 1963, pp. 247–248.

²² See the text of I. Bukraba-Rylska published in this volume.

²³ W. Bliziński, *Co trzeba czynić, aby wieś stała się wzorowa*, “Zjednoczenie” 1938, No. 41, p. 5.

²⁴ E. Małkosza, *Lisków*, a Xerox copy of a handwritten text, p. 34.

²⁵ This quotation is from an interview with an inhabitant of Lisków. The interview was carried out during on-site research.

to its success) the priest could not count on the local peasant community, especially because of a very high level of illiteracy. That is also why he made a particular effort to educate and bring up Lisków's youth.

From the start I understood that one cannot build anything on the shoulders of one person, and in the longer term it is forbidden. I also paid attention to the youth, which – if I can say so – I raised myself²⁶.

An example of such youth is Antoni Szewczyk (currently one of the streets in Lisków is named after him). He was the son of a farmer and was sent to agricultural school in Pszczeliny (paid by the priest). Antoni Szewczyk later became one of the most active inhabitants of Lisków.

However, what seems to be still more essential in this context is that Father Bliziński intentionally introduced two forms of collective activity in Lisków: cooperatives and associations. Both were based on the principles of member participation and democratic functioning. In other words, they were ruled collectively. In effect, as Father Bliziński wrote: *“on the six-member Supervisory Board in each cooperative, there was one priest, one citizen, and four peasants. And among the three members of the Executive Board, there were usually exclusively peasants”²⁷*. According to the priest, it was important to aim for involving the peasants in governing the cooperatives.

It is worth noting that in his descriptions of his work in Lisków Father Bliziński always provided the surnames of the people who were involved in particular activities. Without a doubt, it is important to remember those names when raising the issue of whether or not “Lisków was the work of one person”. It seems that it was not. The question that naturally arises is not if the inhabitants of Lisków participated and became involved in the situation, but rather on what scale and in what way they were involved.

It is important to remember that the potential for participation and involvement in a Polish village was (and unfortunately probably still is) limited. Economic historians and sociologists point to the legacy of relations in serfdom and the framing culture that was present for centuries²⁸. Toward the end of the 19th century, the Polish village was still an isolated, autarchic community. As a result of this, notions of change and progress were foreign to Lisków. Father Bliziński's strong character and distaste for objections was possibly essential to breaking through the over-sensitivity

²⁶ W. Bliziński, *Co trzeba czynić...*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²⁸ J.T. Hryniewicz, *Polityczny i kulturowy kontekst rozwoju gospodarczego*, Scholar Educational Publishing, Warsaw 2004.

and self-conscious attitudes of the peasants and to sustaining the freshly evoked activity, which was void of fundamental traditions. His character was thus also his personal attribute – it helped him handle criticism and also realise goals. This is upheld by examples found in *Wspomnienia (Memoirs)*. One of them pertained to the construction of a new vicarage in Lisków. When the parishioners did not want to finance this undertaking, Father Bliziński stopped giving mass. At times he expelled representatives of the town's inhabitants, when they came to persuade him against a given decision. In the end, the vicarage was built²⁹.

Thus, if Father Bliziński was the strong leader type, then he used his influence to increase the number of leaders in Lisków. In this way, he developed what is currently called the model of collective leadership. In this case, leadership is understood to be more of a process than a position. Important decisions are not imposed from above, but rather they are made collectively, on a horizontal level. There is no “chief”, but there are coordinators. Thus, it seems that in the case of Lisków both models – traditional leadership and collective leadership – coexisted. The latter model developed out of the initiative of the first. What is most interesting is the fact that the two mutually strengthen one another. When Father Bliziński came to Lisków, he was not its leader. In fact, at first he was rejected by the people of Lisków. A group of parishioners confronted the bishop, demanding that “this good-for-nothing from Warsaw” be removed from his post. A few years of effective work completely changed his position. In 1907, the following event occurred:

one morning, there was a great commotion in the village: they are going to take away the pastor. [...] there was a rumbling even in neighboring villages – we will not permit that! [...] his faithful supporters kept vigil. Even some women kept vigil, and they were the same women who, earlier, had not wanted to send their children to nursery school, the same women who had even threatened the priest for “keeping” their husbands for chit-chat. Meanwhile, among the male peasants, the priest had faithful supporters who a few years earlier had not wanted to go to devotionals³⁰.

From that time, Father Bliziński became the unquestioned chief, the leader of the community. The threat of losing the pastor had made the inhabitants realise how important the “eccentric” priest had become

²⁹ W. Bliziński, *Wspomnienia...*, pp. 31–32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49. At that time Father Bliziński left Lisków for a few weeks; he managed to flee from the Russian military police.

to them. The behaviour of the village's inhabitants – who had even tried to carry out a judgment of the military policy – supports the notion that already by that point the priest was considered to be a member of the Lisków community, i.e. someone who “belongs” and who is “ours and we won't give him up”. Father Bliziński's authority increased alongside the undertakings, which he initiated and which drew Lisków's inhabitants into collective action. Among these engaged inhabitants were members of newly founded cooperatives, mutual insurance societies, and associations.

As much as Father Bliziński was indispensable in the first phase of the project (as he wrote: “*Work must be founded on the personal sacrifice and great moral authority of the leader, which motivates the rest by the example that it sets*”³¹), with time collective leadership became increasingly important. It is possible that the moment when the inhabitants of the village had to “take things into their own hands” occurred when the priest left Lisków, after Poland regained independence in 1918. Of course, he continued to work actively for the good of the village and he promoted Lisków nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, considering the priest's frequent absence from Lisków, the inhabitants had to supervise and direct the undertakings that Father Bliziński had initiated. Perhaps that was when the collective identity of the inhabitants was forming most intensively, and they defined themselves as members of an active community, capable of taking the initiative and “taking fate into their own hands”.

Undoubtedly, that was also Father Bliziński's intention. He wanted Lisków to function thanks to “*the peasants, who were conscious, convinced of the soundness of their ideas, prepared for [...] the possibility of temporary defeat, failure and able to begin again*”³². That is also why he cared for the education and upbringing of the local group of administrators and teachers. In the last section of his memoirs entitled *Na marginesie mej spowiedzi (An Aside to my Confession)*, Father Bliziński emphasised that his goal in his work in Lisków was not only to build a material infrastructure, but rather more importantly, to also build a spiritual infrastructure:

*I imagine a model village would be a collective that had gained insight from Christian virtue, that had become a great family, bound together with affection and interests in the rest of the country*³³.

³¹ A quotation from one of our interviewees who owned Father Bliziński's handwritten texts.

³² W. Bliziński, *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 169.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

In contemporary language we would say that the priest essentially wanted Lisków to be a community that was integrated through a common set of values, open to the world, and linked to other communities by a concern for similar issues and interests. His position as a priest was undoubtedly helpful to Father Bliziński in the process of realising his vision. A priest, especially in rural villages, had great authority and could simultaneously use his professional position to develop close ties with the inhabitants. Being a clergyman also allowed him to be a teacher, a parent, and an initiator. Yet this was not enough to elicit the mobilisation that in fact occurred. Therefore, what was Father Bliziński's strategy? What was his method for mobilising the inhabitants in the Lisków project?

First, Father Bliziński created links between Lisków's inhabitants by building networks and later more complex organisations: cooperatives, associations, and mutual support groups. He began by organising a parish orchestra and choir. He himself wrote:

The parishioners were impressed when at midnight mass on Christmas Eve the parish choir performed ceremoniously with the orchestra, which played the trumpets. They liked it very much because nothing of that sort existed anywhere else, not even in distant towns. [...] More people became interested in participating in the choir and orchestra. I chose the elderly in particular because they immediately took the opportunity to create an underground circle, and during practice sessions – when I would attend them – people talked about everything and became more conscious.

Shortly afterward, educational clubs and prayer groups emerged, and even later a parish club and the Women of Landowning Families Club appeared. The priest proposed the first economic initiative two years after arriving in Lisków, when a network of various clubs was established:

Finally on January 13, 1902 – having gathered 35 members – we opened a store (for now in a room that has been designated for singing, in the vicarage), and we set up an association, with the goals of [...] 1. mutual support for the development of agricultural business, 2. providing members of the company and parishioners in general with quality goods at the lowest possible price [...] The name of the company was the "Farmer's Agricultural Trade Cooperative".

Second, Father Bliziński worked to address the real needs of the Lisków population and to show them how they could realise their interests. To fully evaluate the community's situation, it took the priest about two years to gather information and make a diagnosis. During those two years, he wrote:

I became familiar with the village and with its people, with their needs [...] I myself did not know about farming, livestock [...] I did not know how to tell the difference between [...] rye and wheat, potatoes and beets, etc. [...] So I started studying farming books. I asked many questions [...] to gather information about farming, and I did this very carefully, in order not to call into question my authority as a pastor³⁴.

Father Bliziński simultaneously propagated the notion that all activities should be based on cooperative principles as well as on Catholic social teaching. The cooperative movement should be completely self-reliant, self-governing, and independent. It should link the spiritual, farming and educational-cultural elements of life in the village. Thus, the community should be based on three pillars: the Church, education, and cooperation among all of the inhabitants:

The centre of a model cooperative village should be based on the following: the Church with active and community-oriented priests (offering moral regeneration), the People's Home as the centre of cultural life, and schools offering the highest level of education and a Christian upbringing³⁵.

The first and undoubtedly most important institution in terms of the success of the Lisków project was the “Farmer’s” Cooperative (founded in 1902). Thanks to this cooperative, the priest gained greater trust: the people recognised the potential for financial benefits in this initiative and personally experienced “that it was worth it”. The lesson they learned was clear: in protecting one’s personal interests it is worth joining communal efforts. Achieving this state was not easy. Father Bliziński described the first years of activity of the “Farmer’s” Cooperative in the following way:

Not all of the members [of the cooperative] were concerned with the idea of community. This concept was in fact rather foreign in the village. Just twelve members expressed a real commitment and understanding. The rest – well, since the pastor pressed them – could not refuse, but you could tell by their eyes that they were not devoted: here, Father, take these ten rubles and I won't look at them anymore³⁶.

It was not until the company achieved financial success, alongside simultaneous educational efforts, that the resistance of Lisków’s inhabitants to the newly introduced initiatives was broken down.

Third, Father Bliziński worked to find an initiative that would not only be successful but would also stimulate other efforts (it is hard to say how

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

consciously the priest did this). As it has been stated earlier, he started with the “Farmer’s” Cooperative. Today it would be considered a classic example of a social enterprise. This was a good choice. Not only was it profitable, but it also inspired other initiatives. The cooperative created essential conditions for the creation of a society based on citizenship in Lisków, a society based on authentic social dialogue: “*instead of secretive gatherings, it was possible to gather in the evenings and discuss various issues and problems*”³⁷.

It was precisely during those conversations that new ideas were born, and by leading the cooperative the inhabitants were simultaneously learning how to realise visions responsibly. Nonetheless, Father Bliziński continued to oversee these activities. He involved new people in the initiatives that were being realised, and he monitored everything that was going on in the village. The social dialogue which grew out of the “Farmer’s” Cooperative in the end led to many new initiatives and enterprises. They appeared in all spheres of social life in Lisków: economic, educational, cultural, care services, health and hygiene, transportation, and citizenship.

Fourthly, Father Bliziński worked on engaging the entire community in the activities. Today we would say that he was guided by the concept of social cohesion. In the context of Lisków, this meant also including women in social works. Father Bliziński noticed the need for their participation, for example in the establishment of the dairy cooperative in 1905. When he called for a meeting with the peasants, after two or three meetings they stopped attending, and the situation changed only after he invited women. Not only did they “*not intrude, but [...] they often ordered their husbands to go to the meetings, to become members of the cooperatives*”³⁸. Granting Lisków’s women with access to these activities also initiated the Women of Landowning Families Club, and later the Estate Men’s Wives Club, and finally the famous Club of Rural Hostesses, which became the most important women’s organisation in Lisków during the pre-war era.

During the realisation of the Lisków project, other organisations were initiated. Each one carried its own value because it fulfilled a particular need of Lisków’s inhabitants, but they were also valuable as a whole: thanks to these activities, the quality of life increased, and the village developed. However, it is important to remember that above all, these

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁸ G. Waliś, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

initiatives taught partnership and cooperation. They supported the notion that a communal approach to activities was more effective than projects realised individually. Thus, in less than 30 years, Lisków succeeded in realising an extraordinary and unique, institutional development project, which modernised Lisków and shaped the social skills of the inhabitants.

What was Father Bliziński's role in the Lisków project? Without a doubt, he was *the initiator* and *the mobiliser*. Without him, Lisków would probably still be drowning in mud. However, before the process of development could begin, someone or something had to bring an idea to Lisków because it seems that the community capacity was too weak for development to begin internally. Thus, through his knowledge and contacts, Father Bliziński brought development to Lisków. It should be recognised that this was common for Polish villages between the 19th and 20th centuries. As Kazimierz Badziak writes:

*the prerequisite was [...] bringing individuals who had broad support and were leaders in cultural and social work to the frontlines [...] For any change to be implemented in the village it had to be founded on other essential changes in the structure of the community [...] That is why individual actions, during the initial phases of development, could come from the outside. They were most frequently started by a priest, a village teacher, a repatriate, a local government official, and sometimes also by a landowner or a tenant*³⁹.

Thus, the priest opened a community that had been isolated economically, culturally (illiteracy), and politically (on the border of the Russian partition) from the world. He became *a link*, through which the Lisków community – which had been “forgotten by God and people” – gained access to resources that it had not owned and possibly did not even know about before. Thanks to the priest's ideas, technology, information, knowledge, and material resources (including money), experience, and skills came to Lisków. Father Bliziński brought this to Lisków by his own person, embracing the rectory and caring for the needs of the village the whole time. In later periods, these resources became *the bridges* that linked Lisków with the rest of the world. These resources also began flowing out of Lisków: besides the routine exchange of goods, Lisków's unique experience became its resource and the source of its pride, which Lisków's inhabitants shared with others.

³⁹ K. Badziak, *Wieś wzorowa (spółdzielcza) na ziemiach polskich i jej oddziaływanie*, in: W. Caban, M. Markowski (eds.), *Wieś a dwór na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Kielce School of Pedagogy Publishers, Kielce 1999, p. 133.

By his own doing, Father Bliziński developed cooperative relations in Lisków. He encouraged the inhabitants to work together and created the appropriate institutional infrastructure to support cooperation. Thanks to this organised cooperation, Lisków's institutional and community capacity increased. It seems that the Lisków community was ultimately prepared to continue with development based on its own strength and internal networks.

In the light of the above discussion, we can understand the role of the priest and the essence of the Lisków project in terms of the theory of social capital and its significance for development. In short: Father Waław Bliziński's success in Lisków and what he gave to the community was an increasing level of social capital (both bonding and bridging).

4. Conclusions

If we consider the historical example of Lisków to be a prototype of the Polish model of local development, then we can define the prototype in the following way: in underdeveloped communities, local development is linked to increasing social capital. Development results from a combination of linked and mutually influential processes of development, including: economic, cultural-educational, and social. Development takes place when cooperative relations are established among community members. These cooperative relations must take on an organised form, relevant to the existing collaborative activities, and shape a particular model of collective leadership. The social economy is a tool for local development.

Joanna Leszczyńska, Agata Dobrowolska

“Dolina Strugu” (“Strug Valley”) – A Partnership Laboratory¹

“Dolina Strugu” has been developed as an effect of cooperation of local governments of four Rzeszów district, Podkarpacki region communes – Błażowa, Chmielnik, Hyżne and Tyczyn. Historically, this area is named the Galicia.

The initiative was started in 1991 by the establishment of the technologically ultra-modern “Okręgowa Spółdzielnia Telefoniczna” (District Telephone Cooperative, OST), one of the first independent telecommunications operators. It was described as “Światłowodem przez pole” (Optical fibres in the field)², which gives an idea of the incredible impetus of the project. The first successful initiative paved the way for the others³. It triggered the business development pace. Successive economic, social, and educational initiatives emerged, such as:

- **Towarzystwo Rolno-Przemysłowe “Dolina Strugu”** (“Strug Valley” Agro-Industrial Association) with its headquarters in Błażowa, **Towarzystwo Przeciwdziałania Uzależnieniom “Trzeźwa Gmina”** (The Association for Counteracting Addictions – “Sober Commune”) in Chmielnik;

¹ This article is an abridged English version of the paper published in Polish as: A. Dobrowolska, J. Leszczyńska, *Dolina strugu – w laboratorium współpracy partnerskiej*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, K. Hernik (eds.), *Spoleczność lokalna w działaniu. Kapitał społeczny. Potencjał społeczny. Lokalne governance*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008, pp. 113–146 (Editors’ note).

² A. Gontarz, *Wizjonerzy i pragmatycy*, “Computerworld”, May 17, 2004.

³ See: S. Bratkowski, *Spoleczeństwo nieobojetnych. Tak blisko, tak daleko*, “Znak” No. 565, June 2002.

- A social company producing and distributing water “**Chmielnik-Zdrój**”, JSC;
- Non-public schools: **a junior high school, a high school and a music school** (in Chmielnik) as well as **Wyższa Szkoła Społeczno-Gospodarcza** (Social-Economic College) in Tyczyn;
- Utility partnership – a joint waste disposal venture that has been linking four communes of the “Valley” with Dynów for a couple of years.

Formally, “Strug Valley” began to function as a microregion in 1994, along with the establishment of the Agro-Industrial Association, comprising the four above-mentioned communes with a total area of 300 km² and approximately 38,000 citizens. The microregion is rural with two thirds of its employed population working at individual farms, and an average farm area covering only 3.5 ha. It is worth noting that Podkarpacie is one of the poorest regions of Poland, and the unemployment rate has been very high throughout the years.

The institutional output of “Strug Valley” is an impressive work which started long ago on a traditional stubble-field. Let us briefly describe the most significant projects:



District Telephone Cooperative (OST)

The first joint initiative covering the actions of the Valley’s four communes. It was established in 1991 thanks to the help of Polish and American experts sharing their know-how, the commitment of communes, loans for the telephone exchange purchase, as well as the commitment of individuals who, as cooperators, had financed and supervised the building of the infrastructure network. In Chmielnik, these people even guaranteed commune loans with mortgages on their own houses. The establishment of the cooperative was a practical solution to the problem of telecommunications underdevelopment and an expression of disagreement with anticompetitive actions taken by the Polska Poczta Telegraf i Telefon company (Polish Post Telegraph and Telephone) – as it was then called – which was forcing complimentary transfers of networks, socially built by Telephone Committees, in exchange for service access.

The OST was constructed, from the start, with the use of ultra-modern technology solutions (e. g. it possessed the first optical network in southern Poland). The number of phone subscribers reached 9,500 by

the end of 2003 with the number of Internet subscribers reaching about 3,000⁴.



Agro-Industrial Society “Strug Valley” Regional Association

It was established in 1994 to continue the inter-commune cooperation; it started with phone installations and aimed at solving the problems of public utility infrastructure, environmental policy, development of agricultural production and services, working out and implementing a common development strategy as well as the promotion of the then created “Strug Valley” microregion.

The association implements numerous social programmes by raising and then making use of a variety of financial means. The programme is oriented towards farmers, countryside women, the youth, and the unemployed. The projects are aimed at activating and encouraging entrepreneurship, as well as exchanging experiences in stimulating business activity in rural areas. They include activities such as professional training programmes, expert help in establishing a business, and grants for individuals starting such activities. Since 2005 the Leader+ programme has been carried out with the help of local government members. A new development strategy has been elaborated with the Local Action Group responsible for its implementation. The association cooperates actively with local governments and Ukrainian associations.



“Chmielnik Zdrój”, JSC

It was established in 1995 by the Chmielnik commune and a private entrepreneur⁵. It entered the market in 1997. Its offer includes: the mineral water “Alfred”, extracted in Chmielnik; fruit juices, carbonated beverages, and vegetables, fruits, honey; and **locally produced bread** from the microregion. “Chmielnik Zdrój” uses a direct sales model, i.e. it delivers its goods directly to the customers’ houses. It serves more than 50,000 customers in Podkarpacie and Małopolska regions⁶.

⁴ Data source: *Local development plan, OST – Dolina Strugu – Boży Ład*, 2003, “Computerworld” conference materials – “Forum for broadband services: Knowledge – technology – entertainment”.

⁵ The “Sober Commune” association and OST became later shareholders.

⁶ Data source: M. Garbacz M., *Can our valleys change?*, *Gazeta Stowarzyszenia Rodzin Katolickich Koła Parafialnego w Lutczy*, N. 80 and 81, June 2004; information provided by the Company.

The company spends 10% of its income on charities through Caritas. It also cooperates closely with the Association for Counteracting Addictions “Sober Commune” by hiring recovering addicts. It supports the execution of the “Sami Sobie” (“Helping Ourselves”) programme, aimed at creating non-agriculture jobs and increasing the microregion’s competitiveness, using local raw materials and traditional farming products. In 2005, the company was awarded the “Dobroczyńca Roku” (Benefactor of the Year) prize, granted by the Philanthropy Development Academy.

The Anti-Addiction Association “Trzeźwa Gmina” (Sober Commune)

The association has been operating since 1997. It implements comprehensive addiction prevention actions and fights social exclusion. It organises work training programmes for the unemployed, conducts psychological advisory actions for people at high risk of alcoholism, and the **Solidary Action** programme focuses on social and professional integration of the disabled. The association’s activities are focused on the integration of groups vulnerable to pathology and social exclusion, promoting active leisure time among children and youth. The association cooperates closely with “Chmielnik Zdrój”, JSC executing the programme of comprehensive therapy for alcohol dependence. It is also the founder and manager of non-public schools – a social junior high school, a “Strug Valley” high school, and a first stage music school in Chmielnik.

WSS G Wyższa Szkoła Społeczno-Gospodarcza (Social-Economic College)

Wyższa Szkoła Społeczno-Gospodarcza w Tyczynie The first college established in a small town-countryside area in Poland. It was created in 1996 in Tyczyn (population of 3,000) and run by the company Scientia, Ltd., a Tyczyn commune public-private partnership with private shareholders. Sociology is the main major. Every year, the college educates more than 1,000 students out of whom 10% come from the “Valley” communes. The college has contacts with foreign universities, particularly from Ukraine. During our analysis there were some pending decisions in regard to the possible merger with the Rzeszów School of Informatics and Management.

To understand “Strug Valley” as a collective action phenomenon, we need to go back to its roots, to the traditional understanding of authority shaped by the Galician model, to leadership and responsibility for a local community. This article is an analytical study of the results of research conducted in May 2007, consisting of 29 individual in-depth interviews

with people well-known in “Strug Valley”⁷. Accessible data was analysed as well: studies on the history of Podkarpacie region, press publications, UN reports on information technology in “Strug Valley”, legal documents, schedule documentation, financial reports of the described initiatives and the content of related websites.

1. Galician Roots of the “Valley”

Three factors shaped by the history and the Galician tradition were crucial to specifying the goals, activity, and cooperation within the “Strug Valley” initiative:

- Collectivity;
- Self-help cooperation;
- Using political means for self-help.

The Community

The Galician collectivity was manifested in long-lasting, strong local and family bonds⁸. It was built on two pillars: a traditional religiousness related to a cultural activity (e.g. national holidays combined with religious traditions) and the struggle against common problems.

Due to the lack of industry and the low level of urbanisation, being shut off from the markets of the neighbouring regions mountains all around the area, the overpopulation of villages (estimated over 1 million people in 1918) and substantial fragmentation of farms unable to earn their living – Galicia was a land of economic underdevelopment and poverty.

The broad autonomy⁹ and relatively early privatisation, already in 1848, were not very helpful. Admittedly, the peasants acquired small farms but the forests and pastures were still owned by the landed gentry. Therefore,

⁷ The interviews were anonymous, and the respondents’ quotations are given in italics – by local government officials involved in the “Valley” initiative.

⁸ J. Krawczyk, T. Bohun, *Galicyjskość to szacunek dla własnych korzeni*, “Mówią Wiek”, No. 558, June 2006.

⁹ Polish Galicia formed part of the Habsburg Empire (named Austro-Hungarian Empire after the Spring of Nations of 1848) throughout the 19th century, as a consequence of Poland’s partition by three neighboring powers, Russia, Prussia and Austria, at the end of the 18th century. The Habsburgs, unlike the other two invaders, led the politics of giving relative autonomy to the region inhabited by different nations of the Empire (Editors’ footnote).

the peasants, in order to survive, had to continue working at the rich men's manors.

The 19th-century emigration came about as one of the solutions to poverty. It is estimated that during the last decade of that century 300,000 people left to earn money and make a better future. Common poverty, the fact of being left by themselves, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Polish landed gentry not being interested in the farmers' lot – it all gave a very serious impetus to developing methods of self-help.

Self-help Cooperation

To put it simply, you could say that the relations between Galician peasants and the Polish landed gentry were marked by mutual hostility. The landed gentry were treated with much more hostility than the Austrian invaders themselves. It was partly due to the fact that Polish landlords occupied prominent positions in the imperial administration, and therefore they were identified with the invader: "*The peasant could have lived his whole life without seeing an Austrian official other than his own landlord*"¹⁰. Thus, the Polish peasants suffered from the conqueror's repressive measures rather indirectly. And their hostility turned mainly towards the landed gentry. In the 19th century, it took more and more severe forms (with its culmination in 1846). To peasant communities, this situation, and the manor indifference in particular, accounted for the need to develop self-help tools and mechanisms.

Galicia was a land of strong, firm self-governance traditions. (Some institutions, such as public courts¹¹, were functioning from the Middle Ages until the 19th century. At the end of the 19th century, this territory was characterised by efficient commune governments similar to manor governments). Moreover, these were the representative self-governance traditions¹². They are of particular importance, as they account for developing the habit to a certain role arrangement of local leaders in the local community representative institutions.

It appears that the specificity of the Galician model – observed also in "Strug Valley" – is about understanding self-governance as the responsibility

¹⁰ J. Krawczyk, T. Bohun, *op. cit.*

¹¹ i.e. courts obliged to disclose recognised offences at public meetings for all adult village citizens (called the rug). The testimonies were a legal basis for criminal court procedures.

¹² See: J. Bartkowski, *Tradycja i polityka. Wpływ tradycji kulturowych polskich regionów na współczesne zachowania społeczne i polityczne*, "Żak", Warsaw 2003.

for a local community. The leaders are the members of the community who look after its business. To mention a Galician example, we can talk about attempts to appear in courts against the gentry. The elite were a group of committed individuals, competent in local community matters, who saw their role in terms of a mission. Let us add that the leaders’ activity was often based on religious motives – commitment in community issues was an expression of respect for spiritual and moral order¹³. A number of actions were taken by local priests, poor gentry or wealthy peasants. Educated in towns, sometimes even abroad, they were coming back to their villages to take on the fundamental work among their people. In effect, in the region of great poverty, a high mortality rate, illiteracy and alcoholism in the second half of the 19th century, actions for education and raising living standards were initiated. Agrarian clubs, allowance associations, workshops and small companies were called into being.

Newspapers written in a simple language and in a large font were distributed informing people about current events. Pro-sobriety actions were taken.

One of the initiatives, continued until this day, is the work of the mayor’s son born in the Podkarpacie town of Pruchnik – Father Bronisław Markiewicz, the founder of the Michalici Order. Apart from the priest work, he was engaged in extensive activities for his local community. He built orphanages, juvenile centres, foster homes, and professional schools for the poor youth. He educated and encouraged young peasants to a greater thrift. In 1898, he established the “Powściągliwość i Praca” (Restraint and Work) association promoting the ideals of sobriety, patriotism, education of the unprivileged, and counteracting poverty¹⁴. A popular magazine, under the same title, started to be published in order to raise important current socio-political issues.

Another example of a Galician activity was rural savings cooperatives, established by Franciszek Stefczyk, a teacher from Czernichów (a village near Cracow). Savings banks for farmers were supposed to become an alternative to usury. Their task was to accumulate members’ savings and then grant them inexpensive, long-term loans preventing the necessity of cattle and swine sales in the years of crop failure. The work of Stefczyk is a clear example of thinking in terms of self-help, using strong local bonds.

¹³ This aspect has been raised by the most committed animators of the “Strug Valley”.

¹⁴ “Restraint and Work” was the main thought of Markiewicz’s whole educational programme.

The Stefczyk credit institutions were generally liked and accepted, and they did their best to help the rural community become stronger¹⁵. It is also worth noting that the inspiration for this concept was drawn from German solutions, i.e. Raiffeisen credit unions, observed by Stefczyk during his studies in Vienna. Bringing up the works of Markiewicz and Stefczyk is deliberate, as we can find the same attitudes and modes of action in today's "Valley".

The Galician self-governance is at times perceived as a "*method of elite appointment*" rather than as a manifestation of "*real social participation*"¹⁶. It results from the fact that in this model the management of common issues was entrusted to appointed local activists, constituting a local government. In this sense, we can talk of a certain consent, or even trust of the community towards its representatives and their initiatives. As a result, there was no more need for broader participation. To sum it all up, the Galician model of a local community action is an effect of social consensus founded on the activity of enlightened elites and social consent.

Politics and Self-help

The rural population, in spite of its apparent freedom, was deprived of any political rights. The Austro-Hungarian parliament was dominated by conservative circles, opting for the former status quo, and until 1907 peasants were simply not represented.

The changes began at the end of the 19th century along with the emergence of the peasant movement, the foundation of the Stronnictwo Chrześcijańsko-Ludowe (Christian Peasant Party), aimed at representing the peasants' interests¹⁷. It is worth mentioning that one of its principal founders: coming from a gentry family in a village near Lwov, Father Stojałowski, just like Father Markiewicz, was engaged in extensive work in favour of enlightenment and the political activation of peasants. He would buy out peasant magazines and have them published – "Pszczółka" (bee) and "Wieniec" (wreath). He would organise pilgrimages, demonstrations, and establish peasant rural circles and electoral committees. He would participate in electoral campaigns in support of peasant candidates to

¹⁵ J. Bartkowski, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ As early as in 1907, the peasant party won more than half of the seats in the Austro-Hungarian Parliament.

the Sejm Krajowy (National Parliament). In other words, he was a true leader.

It is worth emphasising that the peasants’ movement was born as an instrument of a supra-local way of coping with poverty and harsh living conditions. Therefore, the political involvement was defined as one of the instruments of work in favour of the community.

People’s Republic of Poland (PRL) – Self-government in Opposition

After the Second World War, during the communist period, the authorities tried to change the Galician understanding of self-government, limiting its dimensions and action measures. This was quite unsuccessful, as Podkarpacie was a region of the highest resistance in the country. Its rural areas were strong in resisting the forced collectivisation of farms. The attitudes of independence and resistance to authority were strengthened by the Church – it is here that the churches were built “*to an extent unparalleled in any other Catholic diocese, despite the lack of authorities’ permission*”¹⁸. Speaking in public, the priests would openly criticise the authorities’ abuses. The region also played an important part in backing the Solidarity movement of 1980-1981, being even the birthplace of some of its factions, e.g. NSZZ Rolników Indywidualnych “Solidarność Wiejska” (Individual Farmers’ Trade Union “Countryside Solidarity”)¹⁹.

Thus, the Farmers’ Trade Union was founded, just like the one at the end of the 19th century, by “enlightened leaders” coming from the local community, committed to the political movement in order to represent the rights of all farmers. The main heroes of the movement were Józef Ślisz and Józef Pelc, opposition leaders in Rzeszów and the rest of Poland. Incidentally, they were both related to the “Valley” after 1989.

Such socio-political involvement was an action against the system and its imposed rules. However, the opposition work, both in politics and religion (e.g. sacrificial, joint construction of churches) was still an action in favour of the community, full of the spirit of responsibility.

Therefore, communism, despite the restrictions imposed by authorities over citizens in regard to civic public actions, did not destroy the essence

¹⁸ D. Iwaneczko, *Opór społeczny a władza w Polsce południowo-wschodniej 1980-1989*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Warsaw 2005.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

of the Galician self-governance ethos. This “preserved” ethos survived those difficult times to be reborn along with democratic changes that began in 1989.

2. “Strug Valley” as a Continuation of the Galician Self-governance Model

“Strug Valley” as a collective action phenomenon started by the establishment of a telephone cooperative – one of the first independent telecommunications operators – is the effect of transformation, and as such it brought about autonomy and liberty. The system transformation opened the gates for “Strug Valley”, creating an external framework for its appearance.

The political and economic system changes of 1989 enabled citizens to take up free initiatives, and it was hoped they would bring about some positive results. Recalling that period, the founders of “Strug Valley” underline the extraordinary enthusiasm for work. *“It was a common fervour, to change and do something for the commune, which was not easy to do earlier! There had been a magnitude of neglect, indeed! [...] We wanted to set off, work, and act!!!”*

The telephone initiative was a continuation of work for the local community in our new circumstances, in our new institutional environment. Therefore, we can say that the changes of 1989 were not the flywheel of social activity. It was already underway. The change was mainly about transferring the activities from the opposition to legitimate local government institutions. For the activists, it was a natural transition from behind the scenes, informal involvement in social work, to an empty scene of local politics.

All of the village-mayors and commune heads of Błazowa, Chmielnik, Hyżne and Tyczyn (the “Strug Valley” initiative group) elected during the first local government elections in 1990 entered the system transformation with a load of experience in often long-term opposition cooperation during communism. All of them (and also some of the councillors) acted in one of the “Solidarity” factions – workers and peasants. Thanks to that, they were vested with the relations and bond capital developed on their ground.

The most important link constituting a point of contact for individuals and their connections net was the aforementioned Józef Ślisz – a peasant activist, later vice-speaker of the Senate (1989-1993). Ślisz is an icon – both to Podkarpacie (organiser of farmer strikes), and to the whole

nation (the only representative of southeastern Poland invited to the Lech Wałęsa Citizen Committee, consisting of 135 intellectuals and advisors). He was the chairman of NSZZ “Solidarność”, conducting negotiations during the so-called Round Table with communist authorities on the conditions of giving back the power. He is remembered as a charismatic leader who gathered opposition activists and a highly respected mentor – a visionary but pragmatic. He pointed out the method of implementing the telephone cooperative idea, bringing the American and Canadian solutions to Podkarpacie. He was the man linking the local cooperation network. Later on, he played the role of an intermediary with whose help the local networks could reach farther into the environment. For example, as vice-speaker of the Polish Senate, he helped break bureaucratic barriers placed against the then founded independent telephone cooperative.

Thus, in 1990 the local political scene was populated by people working in already formed cooperation networks and equipped with the capital of common knowledge, enabling the creation of a common ground. They were also equipped with the particular, “preserved”, Galician self-governance ethos.

“Strug Valley” did not emerge from nowhere. It was deeply rooted in the Galician understanding of self-governance. The transformation at the beginning of the 1990s did not cause the erosion of the previously formed understanding of roles. You might say that there was an adoption of a new institutional system provided by the transformation. However, the traditional, Galician understanding of self-governance has not changed, not to the leaders, to whom governance still meant working for the local community which has not withdrawn the permission for the leaders to take up initiatives in its favour. It was confirmed by the first local government election results – the power was given to the ones who had already worked for the common wealth.

In “Strug Valley” we are dealing with a trust based network construction bringing together regional leaders (mayors, village heads, and local government officials) rather than an actual public-private partnership. As one of our interlocutors stated: *“We have not even been aware then that it would later be called a public-private partnership. And we have been in this business before! We were creating an information society, setting up the Internet at schools, when practically there was almost no Internet in Poland”*. The telephone cooperative among communes was not based on any formal document of cooperation. At least no one recalls signing any “pacts” defining the roles and responsibilities of each partner and specifying the rules of cooperation.

In this model, there is no room for inter-sector cooperation understood as local governance, since it is based on the network of socially committed actors, for whom the local government was an area and tool of action. As a result of the transition of the civic commitment potential to the local government sphere, the traditional definition of the third sector makes no sense anymore. Its dimensions shrink. However, not because it is out of the present consideration (in the “Valley” there was consent for local community based initiatives), but because the local government looked from both perspectives at the same time. And thus, there was no need for additional, rank-and-file, broad initiatives. The newly created order was a kind of a hybrid local government and social work system.

The further history of “Strug Valley” is a story of evolution from a network system to other forms of action. The history of the “Valley”, after the telephones were installed, seems to give evidence to the collapse of the Galician model influenced by its collisions with requirements and restrictions of the contemporary public affairs management methods, and probably with tough free market rules as well. We will try to reveal it in the next section.

3. “Strug Valley” Local Governance Culture: The Evolution of a Model

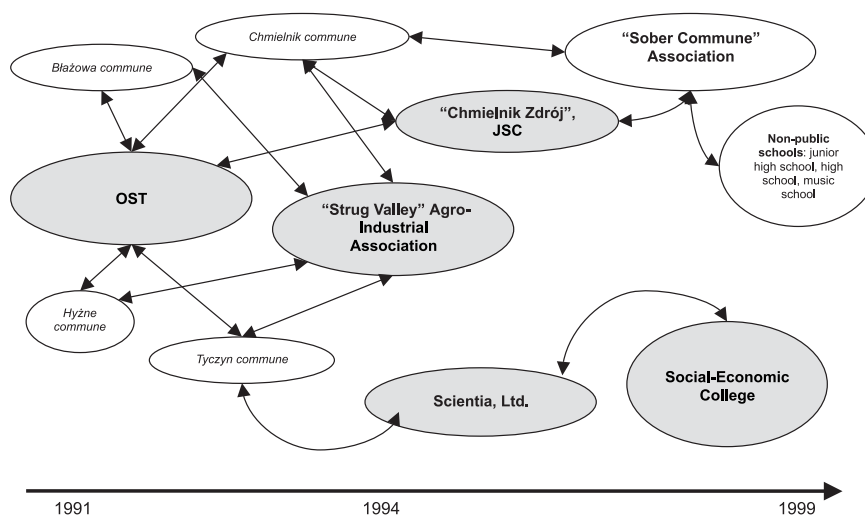
The conducted research clearly shows that the partnership cooperation in “Strug Valley” is of a dynamic nature. It would take various forms at different stages. Therefore, we cannot say that there are uniform common action models. Most certainly, the present “Valley” differs from the one of the mid-1990s, which in turn stands apart from the one at the beginning of the 21st century.

The “Strug Valley” story is a process where a combination of two kinds of activity seems essential – the establishment of new institutions serving as action measures and the subsequent system change – a reconfiguration of the “Valley” shape. The “Valley” history can be split into three periods:

- The phase of the old model domination, corresponding to the stage of creation and setting in motion the District Telephone Cooperative;
- The phase of searching for a new formula of action corresponding to the stage of founding Stowarzyszenie Rolno-Przemysłowe “Strug Valley” (the agro-industrial association “Strug Valley”);
- The phase of the old model deconstruction, searching for an appropriate strategy of functioning on the market.

Figure 1 illustrates this process.

Figure 1. An Illustration of the “Strug Valley” Development Process



Source: Authors.

Galician Model Domination

At first, *i.e.* at the stage of founding the independent Telephone Cooperative, we were fulfilling new institutions, delivered with the system transformation, with an old “Galician” mode of action. It appears that this process took its impetus adapting these institutions to a common understanding of civic activities.

The inter-commune cooperation started off by creating an independent, cooperative telephone network. The final form of the undertaking is the effect of a lucky coincidence of several factors:

- The vision and initiative of the village mayor of Chmielnik (with certain prior knowledge in telecommunications);
- Practical executive instructions²⁰ based on knowledge captured and observed by Ślisz in the American methods of implementation of such undertakings (supported by the help of his American partners)²¹;

²⁰ E.g. recommendation for cooperative organisation structure

²¹ Please note that the activity of Ślisz resembles Stefczyk’s implementation of Western European solutions.

- Access to specialist expertise (of telecommunications specialists, e.g. working for the Polish Post Telegraph and Telephone and of economists). Their knowledge allowed for the application of modern technological solutions and the best formal and legal solutions.

Taking into consideration the complexity of task, the amount of work to do, and the project costs, telephone installations were not supposed to be executed only by one commune. The target selection imposed a collective action. Hence, the logical consequence was local government cooperation, as only the communes had access to finances (directly from the budget or indirectly from loans) and resources (e.g. personal) needed for this investment. It is, however, worth noting that the whole telephone partnership was, above all, a cooperation of socially committed officials of local government.

It is important for the analysis of the whole “Strug Valley” phenomenon, as the telephone cooperative – the first undertaking of the “Valley” – is in fact an embodiment of the Galician cooperation mode, in which the individual (or group) commitment working in favour of a community determine the direction and form of actions²². In the case of the “Valley”, the cooperative formula of the venture organisation may be misleading, as in reality the work on telephone installations was performed by a group of activists assembled in the first term local governments of the Błażowa, Chmielnik, Hyżne and Tyczyn communes²³ and not the common work of civic society. One interlocutor described the village-mayor work at the time of creating the cooperative in this way: *“So we drive through the communes, prepare the documents, evening and night. Here you make a photocopy of the documents, there you get them stamped, then you go to Warsaw, you sleep on the train or you don’t. Finally, you get there. Pioneer stuff – a lot of work. But work, which, thank God, was not wasted”*.

During the first years of its functioning until 1994 the cooperation was informal. Moreover, formalisation at that time was seen as an issue secondary to goal-oriented actions. The documentation was reduced to a **formally required minimum**. Such a way of proceeding (balancing on the verge of law or inconsiderate actions) along with the confusion of local

²² Please note that the decision to begin improving the quality of life of poor, underdeveloped “Valley” commune citizens with telephones instead of sewages, water-supply systems, gas networks or new roads, hospitals and wastewater treatment plants was nothing less but obvious.

²³ Later, also the work of leaders-organisers, who naturally emerged from the Social Telephone Committees operating in all villages with installed telephones.

governments and the civic engagement order gives an impression of the system opacity.

It is, however, worth noting that, paradoxically, this opacity – incidentally possible also due to the original flexibility of young democratic and institutional structures – was not of a dysfunctional nature. On the contrary, the telephone cooperative was highly efficient. It appears that in this case, the opacity was a sort of “side effect” of the Galician understanding of local governance institutions.

By around 1994, the initial stage was finished. From the point of view of the government cooperation goals, the cooperative became an autonomous entity and obtained the economic independence. Becoming an independent market entity meant the end of a certain phase of initiative group cooperation. Therefore, it became essential to find a new action formula. One of the “Strug Valley” founders expressed it explicitly: *“I remember [there was enormous pressure] to formalise us [...], so that we were not just a group of friends talking to one another, so that we become unified and formal in some way [...]. The telephones are ringing, there are new tasks, so the unified group would act together. We had to get formal”*.

Appropriate Cooperation Model. Mortally Close Cooperation within the Association

In 1994, on the eve of the second term local government elections, the main players of telephone installations – mayors, village heads and chairmen of the Błażowa, Chmielnik, Hyżne and Tyczyn Commune Councils – established the “Strug Valley” Agro-Industrial Association. The bringing to life of a unit, creating a new platform of integration, was caused by:

- The necessity to re-legitimise the actions of a working cooperation system, goal reorientation, and network “settlement”;
- Trying to find ways of using the experience, knowledge, how to succeed by joint efforts;
- Desire to consolidate social capital emerged in the course of collective work on telephone installations.

The foundation of a new institution was to become a remedy for the expected system “slackness” support keeping the accumulated potential on stand-by. The trouble is that the association, which was established to support the work for the region, was a bizarre hybrid, gathering the

communes – as supporting members – and individuals, performing the functions of local government representatives (village-mayors, mayors and council chairmen). It was thus an institution formally representing the third sector and yet symbiotic with the local government administration. On the one hand, it was an organism whose form could be applied in a public-private partnership model, while on the other hand, it was operating in accordance with fixed patterns of the Galician ethos.

In other words, since the beginning of its existence, the association, like the cooperative, has struggled with the problem of order confusion and opacity. In the case of telephones, the goal view determining the action direction, apart from initial perturbations and resistance, has been shared. In the case of the Agro-Industrial Association, we can hardly talk of a goal clear understanding.

In regard to institutional processes, the association was a laboratory, where it was attempted to create a synthesis of an old action pattern with a new form. Observing the process of creation and forming the association means in fact watching the dilemmas of joint inter-commune policy, such as:

- The direction and method of action;
- The rules of units cooperation in a multi-order system, the boundaries of different roles operating space;
- The rules and limits of institutional entities integration.

It is commonly believed by the actors that the main cause of disagreements within the association at its start was a clash of two points of view of the “Strug Valley” course of action. The “liberal” vision²⁴ directed at strengthening the regional potential by stimulating its competitiveness, which was supposed to initiate the market mechanisms of attracting the investment capital and, in consequence, led to the improvement of the population material situation with a concept of, let us call it “work at the foundations” – the direct usage of regional resources (e.g. natural resources, human resources – unemployed manpower) to counteract poverty, unemployment, and social pathologies.

The first vision is called the promotional approach, while the second is termed the employment approach, as it concentrates on job creation using the potential of the region. The point is, however, that the orientations are not mutually exclusive. It seems that the difficulty to mark up the route to the goal, which, by the way, has never been questioned (it was the region’s

²⁴ The authors’ term.

development and the improvement of life of local community) was connected with the controversy over responsibility transfer. The liberal concept concentrates on creating infrastructure opportunities and leaving the ultimate goal to free market mechanisms, whereas the concept of work using the resources is based on goal management. In this context, it directly refers to an old Galician understanding of self-governance. It implies the necessity of identifying resources and the ways of their combination. It fosters and legitimises the position of a strong leader – the person who appoints them. The second, even more “hidden” factor generating tensions and a lack of understanding in the association is the issue of the method of combining entities committed to the creation of “Strug Valley”. It appears that the intensity of the dispute about the directions and methods of regional development comes directly from the association form of institutions uniting the main network players. The association, as previously mentioned, was founded to tighten the bonds and cooperation forms. The problem is that the new structures have turned out to be too narrow to encompass a variety of visions. Unlike the loose federal systems visible at the stage of creating the Telephone Cooperative, the Agro-Industrial Association had a very tight structure, which was “blown up” from within by individualistic tendencies.

The described processes pertain to the inner dynamics of social networks constructing “Strug Valley”. It is, however, worth noting that the external conditions were also changing, thus affecting the cooperation pattern oriented at managing public matters. In other words, the erosion of the Galician model was stimulated from two sides – from the inside (by the aforementioned processes) and from the outside by macro processes such as:

- A gradual fading of the necessity of cooperation, e.g. collective harvest, as a result of technological changes in agriculture;
- Migration, inflow of the population from the Rzeszów agglomeration;
- Consolidation of democratic institutions and, in effect, the postulates of institutional transparency.

Activity Individuation – Statue Change

Finally, after 1995, there was a structural change – separate activities were isolated and a new coordination structure was created (a multi-network system). We can talk about three pathways followed by these process participants:

- **Economic initiative pathway** – Scientia, Ltd. was called into being within a public-private partnership framework (composed of the Tyczyn commune and natural persons). The company founded the Social Economic College in Tyczyn.
- **Social economic initiative pathway** – the company “Chmielnik-Zdrój”, JSC was called into being within a public-private partnership framework (composed of the Chmielnik commune, a natural person, and later the “Trzeźwa Gmina” [“Sober Commune”] Association).
- **Non-governmental initiative pathway** – a direction chosen by the “Strug Valley” Association.

The “Strug Valley” Association was a synthesis attempt, i.e. an attempt to be involved in a modern inter-sector cooperation while maintaining a traditional approach towards the authorities’ responsibility for the society. The attempt was not successful as the actors were limited by organisational forms that were too tight. **Not only are the three development paths (chosen later) different from one another in regard to defining methods for reaching goals, but also to the proportion of the old paradigm vs. the new one.** “Chmielnik Zdrój”, JSC acts according to the Galician tradition, the “Strug Valley” Association reflects the model of private-public partnership, whereas Scientia, Ltd. and the College fall somewhere in between.

It was no longer possible to make use of the Galician model in its pure form due to an external change – the change of local government statutes. Since 2002, commune heads and mayors have been elected directly by commune citizens, not by the commune council. The introduction of this novelty took place at the time of the “Strug Valley” local political scene reconstruction. Local government heads were changed. The statute reform exerted serious influence on the local government style. Direct elections gave the mayors and commune heads more power. At the same time, it was now necessary to be transparent in regard to politics. The authorities had to take better care of their PR image. Until 2002, in “Strug Valley”, local government officials would often hold two responsible roles: that of a local government head and that of a company chairman. After the political changes took place, all of the “Valley” communes saw these functions being divided.

4. “Strug Valley” Economic Initiatives Aimed at Meritocratic Management

The Galician model evolution, i.e. the process of recognising the autonomy, competence division, and the individual partners’ action

limits, is reflected also in the way the „Strug Valley” economic initiatives have been constructed and developed, and most of all – in the changes regarding particular initiatives management: from direct local government responsibilities to the model called “**meritocratic management**”.

The dynamics of this process has been clearly reflected in the history of the District Telephone Cooperative (OST). The OST management model evolution has been going on parallel to the changes taking place within the “Strug Valley” partnership (or network). It started off with a federal level, went through the four person level, then a “representative” board of directors, and finally ended up with professional management executed by one chairman. Let us take a closer look at the outlines of this process.

At first, the telephone line installation was seen as a Galician model activity in which the engaged entities were trying to combine different resources, such as knowledge, finances and connections, and use them in order to create and improve initiatives called into being for the local community. In the case of the telephone project, the “Galician tendency” was predominant quite early – at the level of creating the cooperative in which the proper deployment of expert knowledge coming from external sources was of significant importance. It was mainly thanks to the external networks of the “Strug Valley” initiators’ inter-personal connections that this knowledge was used within the social consultancy framework.

The way in which the cooperative initiative was founded in its start-up phase was reflective of the Galician model. At first, the telephone line installation was based on the partner, federal cooperation of four independent entities (the cooperatives: *Telephone* in Chmielnik; *Communications* in Błazowa, *Echo* in Hyżne, and *Teletyczyn* in Tyczyn) coordinated by the Tyczyn OST (headquartered in Tyczyn), chaired by the initiator of the whole enterprise – the Chmielnik commune head. Economic reasons called for using the loose federal establishment. Formally independent, each cooperative was able to take individual loans, which resulted in having access to more funds. The federal establishment resulted also from the fact that telephone line installation in a region so shaped in regard to physical administration required decentralisation. It seems that, apart from the economic-administrative aspect, the decision to create four, federal and yet independent entities was based on political reasons too. Each commune cooperative was independent in deciding about concrete, particular solutions. All the decisions were taken inside the communes with a significant participation of telephone installation leaders, often connected with local governments. It was thus impossible to create decision competition among cooperating communes. It was a very

important solution for the initiative start-up itself. The initiative did not fall flat thanks to this clarification. *“It was better that they could take their own decisions in each commune, even in each town. It was agreed that we [...] do the first string and up to 100 metres of service line. If there was somebody living further away, wanting to prolong the line to his place – then he would have to pay for it himself. But for example people in Tyczyn came to the conclusion that regardless of where one lives, everybody pays the same amount. So the telephones appeared on the mountain”.*

During the federal period, the OST was still using the free help provided by external experts. Thanks to that, four commune cooperatives were incorporated to the OST, and their assets were transferred as a contribution in kind. This decision was taken on the basis of an economist’s suggestion.

The 1994 merger was the final part of the company’s economic independence²⁵ resulting in having to change the cooperative management model. A four-person board of directors was called into being. It was composed of commune representatives (one from each commune). This establishment did not seem perfect from the point of view of decision making effectiveness. The representative board stage lasted approximately four years and it was rather instable. The destabilisation resulted also from disagreements within the partnership network – happening inside the then appointed “Strug Valley” Agro-Industrial Association. The OST economic independence meant that it became a full-fledged market player. It had nothing to do with social or amateur work anymore. It became part of a world in which it was not so easy to gain free help and consultancy. After all, social consultancy does collide with the competitiveness logic. Therefore, OST had to become more and more professional, if the Cooperative wanted to exist on the market. Again, it was necessary to develop a new management model for the enterprise.

In 1998, the statues were changed as a result of voting. The four-person board was changed into a one-person board. The cooperative was now managed by one of the main “Strug Valley” telephone installation architects, who had been involved in the project since the beginning. He was a Błazowa first term commune council chairman, a telecommunications expert with many years of experience in managerial positions in a large telecommunications company.

²⁵ It triggered off the stage of looking for a new cooperation formula between the partners.

This is how the cooperative started to be managed in a meritocratic way making it independent from the direct influences of local government stakeholders. The cooperative is still prosperous on today’s telecommunications market largely thanks to that move. Its offer is technologically advanced, and the company is one of the market leaders. The OST development is a transfer from the full, social engagement of its initiators (local government representatives) to the establishment in which the development path is defined by a professional specialist, not related to local government structures. It is a transfer from the Galician model to a model of functional divisions characterised by clear responsibilities among stakeholders and among various sectors. The final model is that of transparency and professionalism. The echoes of this process can also be heard in the history of the “Strug Valley” Regional Agro-Industrial Association. The fact that this process reflects the development of an initiative which is not strictly economic proves that it is important and universal for the “Valley”. Therefore, it can be said that the whole “Strug Valley” is a multi-level history of changing management models.

Let us remember that the association was created to be a new cooperation platform for local government officials wanting to develop the region. Its constricted organisational structure, however, did not manage to have enough room for various visions whose part was finally executed as separate economic initiatives²⁶, quite independent from the association. After some time, the organisation shaped the scope of its activities and focused on training programmes supporting the “Valley” community.

It made excellent use of financial help offered by domestic and foreign funds (including accession and, later, EU funds). The “Valley” has been developing dynamically since 2002. The “Strug Valley” Association is now an expert in acquiring funds and executing training and assistance projects. The pool of funds acquired and used for social programmes increased five times from 2002 to 2007. The association has executed almost 20 different projects²⁷, it has established an office and has employed a few people.

The professionalism of the Agro-Industrial Association partly stems from the internal order of the organisation. Paradoxically, thanks to relieving the association of its local government top management, it was no longer perceived as a two face entity and began to function as a model

²⁶ i.e. “Chmielnik-Zdrój”, JSC, and the Social-Economic College.

²⁷ Organisation of consultation points for farmers and small companies, professional activation for country women, free English courses, participation in two editions of the “Leader+” programme.

third sector organisation. In short, the association managed to define the limits of its activities, its role and its relation to partners, as well as the tools with which it wanted to realise its objectives. The association and the local government are now cooperating like real partners within the 'Leader+' programme which became a platform for working together on the "Strug Valley" regional development.

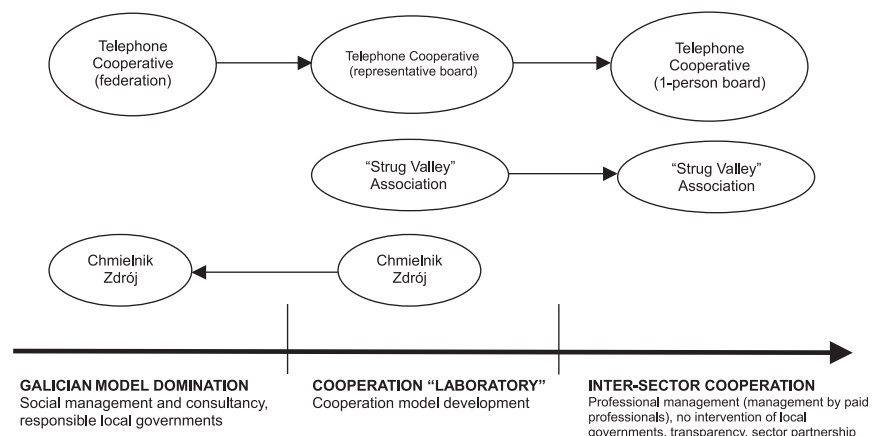
The company "Chmielnik Zdrój", JSC is, on the other hand, an attempt to reverse the logic of the "Strug Valley" model evolution. The enterprise was called into being as an answer to problems leading to the local community exclusion. One of them is the lack of outlet markets for agrarian products, which made it necessary to create jobs outside agriculture and undertake certain actions promoting local products and acquiring outlet markets for them. A lot of people are addicted in the region. In order to tackle this issue, a comprehensive therapy programme (including new jobs for alcohol addicts) was initiated. Therefore, "Chmielnik Zdrój" seems to be a social economy project, even though it is a listed company. The whole construction of the enterprise is as Galician as it can be – both in regard to defining its activity aims (helping the local community) and finding management-organisational solutions. The company is managed socially – by the initiators and shareholders. From the point of view of described process of professionalisation, the company is at the pre-meritocratic level. It did not manage to avoid a lot of obstacles lurking for market players. For example it employed too many people, almost 500²⁸ in high season (in a commune populated by approximately 6,200 men, women, and children).

Maintaining high employment levels brought about a financial crisis in the company. It was refused the promised EU funds. Thus, taking into account the transformation model, we can say that "Chmielnik Zdrój", JSC is still waiting for the right director to manage it.

On the basis of our analysis it cannot be stated for sure that the traditional, Galician initiative management method is worse. It just has to be completed with modern planning and proper economic activities. We will observe a similar situation in the next section. It is not about changing the models, but rather about finding the right proportions.

²⁸ There was an employment restructuring in the company. Now, 150 people are working there (company data).

Figure 2. “Strug Valley” Initiatives in Cooperation Model Changes



Source: Authors.

5. “Strug Valley” Economic Initiatives – Embeddedness and Empowerment

In order for economic initiatives created in the framework of the social economy to be effective they should be rooted in local communities. The company ought to be socially connected with the stakeholders (such as customers and suppliers) belonging to the community in which the organisation is operating. Partners should be treated with particular attention and respect. The result is that such a company takes into consideration not only market factors.

From this point of view, we can say that all the “Strug Valley” economic initiatives are “embedded”. Each initiative makes use of different instruments relating it to the local community, in various ways. Let us take a closer look at particular solutions.

The most important OST²⁹ root instruments are: the offer profile and the way stakeholders are allowed to co-decide about the company. The cooperative’s offer is divided into two parts: services based on special preferences for the cooperative members (for example, low standing charges, low Internet fees, free calls within the area of four “Strug Valley” communes, free Internet access for schools and public libraries, services improving the quality of life – such as telecardiomed, and the possibility

²⁹ Telekardiomed makes it possible to undergo an EKG test and give back the test results to the patient on the phone.

of receiving individual bonuses – such as even lower standing charges for the poorest), and services paid in full (Internet access, Internet TV). On the one hand, the offer diversification fulfils the company philosophy focused on helping the local community, while on the other hand, it allows the company to gain the profits necessary to finance social objectives and develop itself further, and to increase the quality of its services.

Another important aspect of the company being socially rooted is the way it is managed, taking into consideration the opinions of stakeholders. Each OST co-owner (currently 7,000 natural persons and legal entities), regardless of its share size, has one vote. Every five years, the members choose their representatives who, during annual meetings, take binding decisions on issues such as the cooperative's financial plans, admissible levels of financial liabilities, authorisation of financial statements submitted by the Supervisory Board, statute changes, and selecting and dismissing Supervisory Board members. The cooperative's Board of Directors meets with all of the cooperative's members once a year. The meetings are held in all 28 towns in which the OST operates.

The rooting mechanism of the company “Chmielnik Zdrój”, JSC is quite different. On the one hand, the enterprise creates its customer relations, while on the other it focuses on local suppliers – farmers providing raw materials (crops, and produce) and local employees. The company (producing *Alfred* mineral water, flavoured drinks, and organic food – vegetables, bread, honey) is strongly related to its local customers. It uses individual sales techniques, employing its own sales representatives who sell products to local customers directly, for instance in their flats. Each “Chmielnik Zdrój” salesman builds up and then provides services to his/her own customer network (the company has more than 50,000 regular customers³⁰ today). Thanks to this marketing approach, the company has developed strong and individual customer relations. It is Customer Relationship Marketing aimed at providing services to the local community (most of its clients), the very essence of rooting.

“Chmielnik Zdrój” takes good care of local suppliers and employees, treating it as its mission. The social aim here is more important than the economic one. We must remember that the company was created to provide new employment opportunities outside agriculture, open up outlet markets for local agrarian producers, and assist with the therapeutic process of alcohol addicts. As far as local suppliers are concerned –

³⁰ Data based on company information.

the company guarantees buying crops and produce from them³¹, helps them obtain ecological certifications for their products and make proper decisions in regard to production processes, and encourages them to undertake innovative ventures (e.g. grow untypical plant types). As for the local employment – the company, located in the centre of regional unemployment, gives work to people trying to stop being alcohol addicts and supports their therapy (offering elastic work hours adapted to their therapy schedule). The company is a fervent supporter of sobriety actions and the charitable “Trzeźwa Gmina” (sober commune) Association.

The rooting has a more direct character in regard to the Social Economic College in Tyczyn. Here, the market mechanisms are effectively used, stimulating the commune’s development: the College employs administrative staff mainly from the local community, it makes contributions to the commune budget, improves demand on the local market (lodging, restaurants, etc.), and helps renovate historic buildings in the city³². The College offers 10% rebates on tuition fees for “Strug Valley” students.

The first thing “Strug Valley” brings to mind is the famous telephone installation. Most microregion inhabitants make the equation between the telephone cooperative and the “Valley”. The social effect generated by the OST may be called “empowerment”³³, the unusual strengthening of the local community. It is a very deep, almost revolutionary, cultural change. The telephone became part of people’s everyday lives, changing them completely: children do their homework on the phone and older people talk to one another for long hours (sometimes in a group, teleconference mode). The telephone became a major instrument of social integration. One of the people we talked to said: the (physical and financial) availability of telecommunications services made it possible “*for people to start talking to one another*”. They do talk – a lot! It has been estimated that the total length of telephone conversations in the “Valley” is more or less on the level of a large city. At the early stages, the cooperative operated on the level comparable to that of New York³⁴.

³¹ Farmers sign short-term or mid-term contracts with the company, which allows them to sell their products without having to take them to distant wholesalers. It is a source of secure income, and certainty in regard to the successive year market situation

³² Today, the college is part of the non-public Rzeszów School of Informatics and Management. Our analysis was conducted when the College was still an independent entity.

³³ “Empowerment” here is understood as the effect of actions aimed at helping the local community or actions undertaken by the community itself in order to be stronger.

³⁴ Data source: B. Bubula, *Sami sobie*, “Obywatel”, 2003, No. 5.

The OST success was an encouraging example for other innovative economic activities. None of them, however (not even “Chmielnik Zdrój”, JSC or the College), managed to create so much “empowerment” or entrepreneurship stimulation. The “Strug Valley” inhabitants treat the cooperative like an icon of their success. In people’s minds, the other initiatives are not so much associated with the “Valley”.

The “Chmielnik Zdrój” company is particularly interesting in this respect for our analysis. The company was created in order to help the local community and it makes use of a vast array of rooting instruments.

The history of its creation is almost mythical, as in its early days the company was following a kind of informal methods – it was just a small bottling plant located in commune cellars that had been constructed as nuclear shelters, the waters were manually bottled, production handled by several people – mainly the unemployed³⁵. Therefore, one might think that “Chmielnik Zdrój” is predestined to fulfill the role of a rooted company, a partner for local stakeholders. However, according to feedback given by co-operators, the rooting is rather weak³⁶ in spite of the vast array of used means. The rooting is made no stronger by employees’ ideas to establish trade unions. In conclusion, we may say that the most important “Chmielnik Zdrój” stakeholders do not identify themselves with the venture as it is not “their” creation.

When analysing the process of the gradual straying away from the Galician model to the public issue management through inter-sector cooperation, it is a good idea to juxtapose two ventures particularly concerned with social objective fulfilments – the OST and “Chmielnik Zdrój”. Both companies were founded in a Galician style. They were both developed with a flourish and a certain amount of non-transparency from the institutional point of view. The rules of local governments, the market, and citizens were all mixed up. There were no clear-cut responsibility limits. The OST proves that the Galician model can be very successful. In other words, the **“Strug Valley” experiences demonstrate that it is not possible to say that the inter-sector cooperation and the public-private partnership are better forms of activity, a better approach to public matters.** The effectiveness of the Galician model – whose **irrefutable advantage is its receptiveness towards the local community**

³⁵ Data source: Garbacz, *op. cit.*

³⁶ A. Gramzow, Experience with Endogenous Rural Development Initiatives and the Prospects for Leader+ in the Region “Dolina Strugu”, Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe, Discussion Paper No. 89, 2005.

needs – depends on fulfilling two conditions: 1) sticking to market rules which render it possible to maintain profitability, and competitiveness; meritocratic management, and 2) streamlining the company rooting level and balancing its economic and social goals. To put it simply, preferential treatment for local stakeholders while maintaining market calculations and economic settlements.

There are different kinds of rooting. The Social Economic College represents an establishment with a dominant market element, “Chmielnik Zdrój” seems to be rooted too much with its predominance of social objectives, and the OST seems to be an ideal proportion of both (social and economic) aspects. Paradoxically, a good social economic venture must not overrate the social component of its objective.

When analysing the rooting levels, it is necessary to remember that the companies we are describing are the most effective organisations in the region³⁷.

6. Summary

“Strug Valley” is not just an initiative or a single venture, but it is a multi-level, well-thought combination of actions, solutions, and connections. The history of the “Valley” reflects the transition from the Galician local government model to inter-sector cooperation. The transition does not have to mean giving up one way completely in favour of the other. Its most important aspect is the model “upgrade” – adapting the proven Galician methods to new standards resulting from changing public issue management norms. All the actions have to be transparent and professional. As for the partner cooperation, the model change included the establishment of clear-cut responsibility and competence limits of particular actors (local government, business, third sector organisations). In the field of economic initiatives, the transition was mainly concerned with meritocratic management implementation and establishing proper root levels.

In order to explain the “Strug Valley” processes, the laboratory metaphor is extremely useful. The laboratory is a workshop for testing and developing the optimal partner cooperation model, looking for an adequate formula of united actions. It reminds us of medieval alchemic study rooms where people were trying to discover the philosopher’s stone

³⁷ T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza (eds.), *Kapitał społeczny. Ekonomia społeczna*. Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2007.

– a magic substance that changes metals into gold. In the “Strug Valley” laboratory, people would look for something valuable for the cooperation, for best local community solutions, the best remedy. Let us not forget that the beginnings of partner cooperation from the 1990s were characterised by the lack of clearly defined inter-sector cooperation procedures, so the original “Valley” establishment was quite experimental in its character.

“Strug Valley” was a stormy attempt to find proper formulas adapted to the changing social, economic, and legal conditions in early, post-communist Poland. One of the most important demands was the crystallisation of inter-sector cooperation standards and the promotion of the transparency public institutions.

The laboratory metaphor reflects the dynamics of processes taking place inside the “Valley” cooperators’ network. Just like in chemistry laboratories, the processes would often be violent, sudden, and rapid. The peculiar “Strug Valley” voltage setup would make the public matters management transition process occur in all sorts of difficult situations. Apart from all that, the laboratory processes were modified by external factors, such as the modernisation of the local government election system.

This analysis is one of many possible interpretations of the “Strug Valley” phenomenon. It does not pertain to evaluating it. Our selection of facts on which the review has been based may make someone think that the “Valley” is haunted by some negative shadows. It has to be underlined, however, that the “Valley’s” institutional and social achievements are quite impressive. “Strug Valley” is a powerful cannon built on a fallow. It is a great example of momentous actions, courage, commitment and effort. At the same time, the “Valley” is not a delusion or a castle in the air. The social and economic initiatives undertaken by the “Valley” have been extremely successful in developing the commune and its people. It is shown in press articles, talked about during various conferences, and presented in scientific analyses. The “Valley” has become an interesting subject for the Polish parliament, the world of business, foreign scientists, and international organisations, such as the UN. Our article has presented different aspects of this region’s development and we hope that our ideas will help create effective and innovative solutions in other parts of Poland.

Kamila Hernik, Jacek Kisiel

A Green Goose in Rodaki – The Transformation of a Successful Project into Local Community Development¹

Located north west of the Małopolskie province, by the border with Silesia, **Rodaki** is a Klucze commune in the Olkuski district village. It neighbours upon a large enclave of the Jurajski Protected Landscape Area. The region is full of forests sliced by valleys with numerous rocks and caves. There are hillsides to the north of the village and meadows to the south and east.

Rodaki is inhabited by merely one thousand people. At first glance, it is a normal, tidy village with two churches – a new, parish church made of brick, and a tiny, historic 17th-century church. There is a primary school in the centre of the village, a Volunteer Fire Brigade (*Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna*) station, a post office, and a small shop. A careful observer will be able to see strange boards, located at several points in the village, depicting a goose. He might also be interested in wicker baskets full of geraniums, displayed almost in each garden. These are the visible signs of the project entitled: “Green Goose in the Land of White Fluff”. The initiative was supposed to be a minor venture, and yet its positive results were surprising even to the authors of the project. The initiative helped the local community achieve unexpected success in a very short time:

¹ The article is an English version of the paper published in Polish as: K. Hernik, J. Kisiel, *Zielona Geś w Rodakach, czyli jak przekuć sukces projektu na rozwój społeczności lokalnej*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, K. Hernik (eds.), *Spoleczność lokalna w działaniu. Kapitał społeczny – potencjał społeczny – lokalne governance*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008, pp. 453-69 (Editors’ note).

their village became famous, not only within the region. These days, it is visited by Polish and foreign media representatives and awarded prestigious prizes.

We have decided to analyse this phenomenon. In 2007, during the summer, we visited the village twice. We conducted a series of unstructured interviews with 10 people deemed important in the eyes of the local community, who are involved in the most important undertakings. We had also talked to the Klucze commune head and the Social Welfare Centre (*Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej*) director, who provided us with additional insight². Moreover, we had a chance to see how the village citizens were able to act during a special event they had organised and called the “Meadow Mowing Festival”.

Apart from all that, we used information from press articles and other available publications on the village – chronicles kept by the villagers, and documents on the Rodaki and Klucze regional development, including stenographic records of the Commune Council meetings.

In Rodaki, we were able to capture the citizens’ social activity wave at the moment of its first discouragement signs being observable, but shifted aside immediately. The community is so strong that it does not let the grass grow under its feet. We will try to shed some light on how the village’s capacity has been created, on the role of collective action traditions, the origins of the region development, and the influence exerted by external factors. We will also present the internal institutions network and the way it operates. We will review some local economic initiative, based on the “Green Goose in the Land of White Fluff” project, and analyse the prospects of Rodaki Local Partnership development.

1. Social Capital

Regional Traditions

Rodaki is a frontier village influenced by three regions which belonged to three, different annexed territories³ during the 19th

² Interview fragments are cited in italics, and divided into respondents’ functions (formal/informal) in the analysis. The respondents’ names have not been disclosed, as, in accordance with the field research rules, the interviews have not been authorised.

³ The partition of Poland among three bordering states – Russia, Prussia, and Austria – took place at the end of the 18th century. Throughout the whole 19th century, Polish territories, belonging to each partition, were influenced by different development processes – both socially, and economically. Formally, Rodaki was located under Russian

century. Close to Silesia, today it is part of the Małopolska province. During the 19th century, Rodaki was located within the administrative borders of Congress Kingdom (under the Russian partition), but its residents' employment structure and sources of income was definitely characteristic of Silesia. Infertile land often forced the residents to have two jobs and to work in nearby Silesian factories and coal mines. They often spent their free time dealing with inefficient farms. Under the partition, Congress Kingdom administration exerted influence upon Rodaki inhabitants. Our analysis, however, needs to take into consideration factors such as: agrarian structure, traditions, and local bonds. These factors prove that Rodaki is, in fact, more related to Galicia than to Congress Kingdom or Silesia. This assumption is based on comparative research conducted by Jerzy Bartkowski⁴ who said that typical Galician villages are characterised by the following: strong local bonds, traditions, residential habits, local integration, and settlement structural factors (Galician villages are less populous, but larger and more united than those in other parts of Poland).

Galician characteristics stem from live local communities, Catholic Church social influences, and the continuity of individual, family and community lives. The communal existence may be observed in collective social and political behaviours, as well as in various activities of institutions and organisations supporting local bonds and cultural traditions. The collective cohesion and solidarity is quite visible in the region. The residents – in spite of the agrarian overpopulation, non-farm remuneration sources, and high land prices – are reluctant to leave the place where they were born. Migrations are mostly temporary and economic in their character. The money usually returns to the region⁵. It is an excellent grounds for the development of local social life, collective actions, and a more active and effective local government.

Apart from the abovementioned local bonds, Galicia differs from other Polish regions because of its long traditions of autonomy and local self-governance⁶. The combination of all these factors is very important:

rule (Congress Kingdom), but the village was strongly influenced by Prussian Silesia and Polish Galicia (part of Habsburg Empire). The authors of this analysis treat Galician models as crucially vital.

⁴ J. Bartkowski. *Tradycja i Polityka. Wpływ tradycji kulturowych polskich regionów na współczesne zachowania społeczne i polityczne*, "Żak", Warsaw 2003.

⁵ Compare remarks on migration in the work of I. Bukraba-Rylska, in this volume.

⁶ Compare remarks on Galician self-governance models in the work of J. Leszczyńska and A. Dobrowolska, in this volume.

“Individuals treat personal experiences as part of their collective fate. All of their protective actions, definitions and identity choices, and cultivation of certain features are undertaken with a strong feeling of belonging to a group. Group influences upon particular persons and spontaneous individual reactions reinforce each other. Not only is every individual pushed towards behaving in a certain way by his own feelings, not only does he share them with other community members, but also he is influenced by group pressures”⁷.

In our opinion, the Galician society features, described above, and theoretical considerations about strong internal community bonds materialise in Rodaki.

Collective Action Traditions

The Rodaki Local Partnership is definitely related to the fact that collective action traditions are still quite strong in the village. It is thanks to these unwritten laws that almost every public building has been built here.

Over the ages, the inhabitants have learnt that they should count on one another when faced with poverty, fires, or government tardiness: *“if people hadn’t done things collectively, they wouldn’t have had anything. It is coded in our minds. It is how we came up with our water-supply, as well as gas, and telephones. We can’t forget it”*⁸.

This tradition is rooted deeply in the past. The social committee protecting the village historic church has existed for so long that most residents do not even remember when it was established. According to our respondents’ accounts, chronicle reports, and registers regarding the Rodaki collective actions, we have been able to distinguish three periods during which the inhabitants’ activity reached its climax. To simplify it, we shall call these periods “social activity waves”. The first wave took place at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, when the village was run by today’s Rodaki grandparents. The second period occurred at the end of the 1950s and lasted until the 1970s, when it was the today’s parents turn to take care of things. The third wave began at the end of 1990s and has been up and running until our own times.

The first social activity wave was linked to the beginnings of civic society in Rodaki. The people were involved in Polish political and social

⁷ J. Bartkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

⁸ Interview with the Rodaki village head.

matters, and they were willing to build social organisations and work for the benefit of local development. During the 1920s, Rodaki residents were considerably engaged in the peasants' movement. In 1925, they established a Peasants' Party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*) circle within the framework of which "Wici" – the Polish Union of Countryside Youth (*Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej RP "Wici"*) – was created in 1934. For a long time, Rodaki cultural and social life was concentrated around "Wici", and new social ventures were called into being: a reading room, a library, and even a theatre group. In 1937, the Peasants' Party circle co-organised a strike in the Olkusz district. It was in Rodaki that a secret meeting between SL circles took place. Wincenty Witos⁹ was one of its participants. A few political activists from Rodaki were arrested for their engagement in organising the strike. "[Rodaki residents] were on a kind of different intellectual level. They would read books, and open up peoples' universities. They were very close to Witos – they were a civil society in the past, before the war [the Second World War]. It has never changed"¹⁰.

1928 was a breakthrough year for Rodaki inhabitants. Almost the whole village was destroyed by a disastrous fire. Faced with the passivity of the authorities and sluggishness of the insurance company, the residents started acting on their own. They signed a mutual agreement in accordance with which some people relinquished their rights to outer lands. A new village plan was developed, and every fire victim was allowed to build a new house. This is how one of the unwritten laws was created. It says that you should relinquish a part of your own land, if such is the demand bringing about the general wealth of the village. When rebuilding their houses, Rodaki residents decided not to let such disasters happen in the future, and they established a Volunteer Fire Brigade (VFB). The firemen annexed a shed, which had been previously used to fire roofing tiles, and arranged a station, as well as a common room in it. The whole village was trying its best to equip its new fire brigade.

After the Second World War, the process of reconstructing social and cultural institutions in Rodaki began. The Volunteer Fire Brigade and a primary school (existing since the mid-1920s, with its main office in the Community House (*dom ludowy*)) were reactivated. The political situation

⁹ One of the most famous peasant leaders in Poland at the turn of the 20th century. During the interwar period he was the prime minister of the Republic of Poland three times.

¹⁰ Interview with the Klucze commune head.

made it impossible, however, to re-establish the people's movement destroyed in the country by communist authorities. The village capacity was energised again by the new generation, in the second half of the 1950s. It was the beginning of the second social activity wave. Social actions undertaken then had to take into account communist conditions. For instance, it was not possible to be involved in any political ventures.

In 1954, the residents managed to open a new post office in the village. Then, in 1956, they voluntarily relinquished parts of their lands in order to build a new fire brigade station. It was the first example of a voluntary action which became the basis for voluntary work for the benefit of the village under communist rule. Voluntary action were also undertaken in the past – even before the War, the residents managed to pave the main village road and dig a pool for the firemen. At the end of the 1950s, the church protective committee was extremely active. In 1955, it raised funds from the province relics conservator to renovate the roof of this unique building. After that, the residents were trying to create a Rodaki parish, which finally happened in 1958. Then they built a cemetery, a parsonage, and a new church. Again, the inhabitants relinquished their property rights in order to give up land for the construction. The construction works began in 1959. From 1968 to 1971, the people disassembled the ruined Community House themselves in which the old school was located. A new school was built subsequently. By then, it had become a beautiful tradition for people to give away parts of their own land in favour of a collective investment – they did it this time again. Right after children started attending their new school there was another huge investment in the village – the construction of a new parish church (1972–1976).

At the turn of the 1980s, the region was relatively prosperous. Large factories located near the village needed workers. Mornings and afternoons, buses would take village inhabitants to work in factories and steelworks. People were becoming rich and were able to build new, nice houses. The infrastructure was growing: the sewage and telephone systems and the gas network (since 1991). These investments, however, were quite different than the ones described before: they were executed because of government decisions.

It was only at the end of the 20th century that the third social activity wave began – full of grass-roots' initiatives and civic actions which resulted in building Rodaki's internal institutional network. The third wave constitutes the core of our analysis.

This brief overview of Rodaki collective actions shows that throughout history there were periods of intensive change and dynamic

progress followed by periods of stagnation. The village development processes are also strictly related to the changing characteristics of the local community and social relations. There is no doubt that Rodaki residents have always had strong community identification and such a tradition is still alive.

It is the levels of social engagement that have been changing. The first and second wave of village leaders were social activists for whom the wealth of the village as a whole was more important than their own. Their actions were reflexive and spontaneous, undertaken as an answer to shortages and needs. Some village inhabitants possess this kind of motivation even today. The third social activity wave in Rodaki saw the birth of new processes causing the community to experience a real breakthrough. The instincts are more institutionalised now – the organic will has been completed with rational one¹¹. There are new organisations in the village, which have canalised social activities and set new trends. In the past, the residents would react to any problems appearing daily in their lives, trying to organise the community life. At present, the village development is more regular and purposeful, showing residents how to continue their social actions. This fundamental change has resulted in the establishment of formal institutions responsible for specific activities and forming a peculiar social network.

The Rodaki Internal Institutional Network

A small village community has managed to create an exceptionally rich internal institutional network acting for the benefit of local development. The network includes: the public sector represented by the village council, formalised non-governmental sector (the Voluntary Fire Brigade and the “Rodaki Jurajska Village” Association), and less formal institutions such as: the Village Women’s Society, the “Swojacy” cabaret, and circles linked to the primary school.

Village Council – extremely active at the end of the 1990s, when Ms. Walentyna Kardynał was elected the council chairperson and Ms. Halina Ładoń became first a community council member and shortly after the village development animator. The Village Council changed its role from that of council chairperson’s advisory body to an executive organ. The community capacity could now be used to boost some concrete actions aimed at the village’s development, such as

¹¹ Difference according to the F. Toennies’s classic typology.

building parking lots and sidewalks in front of the church, cleaning up, and organising holiday events¹². These days, the council role seems to be becoming less significant in regard to these activities, as certain parts of its responsibilities are being naturally taken over by the “Rodaki Jurajska Village” Association. Recently, the Village Council efforts, related to Rodaki development, have been truly recognised and awarded several distinctions.

“Rodaki Jurajska Village” Association – called into being as a result of the Klucze commune council resolution passed in order to close the Rodaki primary school. The association was established ad hoc so that it could take over from the commune responsibility for running the school. The body organised a huge campaign as a result of which the controversial commune council decision was delayed. Presently the association coordinates after school education and organises cultural events. It is also involved in ecology and sports. It plays an important role in establishing good relations among the village residents¹³.

Primary school – its beginnings date back to early days of Poland’s independence after 1918¹⁴. At first, children would attend classes in private flats, then in the Community House. After the Second World War, the residents built a new school building, even though they did not have the communist authorities’ permission¹⁵. It was a voluntary action engagement, and they used their own land and materials. During the 1990s – for demographic and economic reasons – there was a threat that the school would be closed. But it only increased the school activity. It became another local initiative centre, including many projects. The school has a certificate issued by the Ecologic Activity Local Centre, and it is the main venue for the European Ecologic Club. A project called “Creativity” turned out to be a tremendous success. The Rodaki girls’ team was one of the laureates of the National Creativity Competition.

¹² Periodic events organised in the village, such as: “Bread Day”, “Green Goose Adventure”, the “Goose in the Culture, Goose on the Table, Goose in the Environment” conference, providing integration functions to Rodakians.

¹³ See: www.jurajskawioskarodaki.prv.pl/onas.

¹⁴ Poland regained independence after the First World War, on the basis of the Treaty of Versailles.

¹⁵ The new school building was constructed somewhat deceitfully. For a long time, the residents were not able to obtain the necessary building permits, so they decided to build an additional floor in the new headmaster’s flat. The official construction assessment stated that the renovated building would be too dangerous to live in. Faced with this new fact, the authorities were forced to issue a permit allowing residents to build a new school.

The same team took part in the international finals of this competition, organised in USA, taking the 22nd position.

Voluntary Fire Brigade – called into being after the fire of 1928, which had destroyed most of the village. The Brigade has always been highly appreciated in the village. On the one hand, the fire brigade owes a lot to the residents: both the old and the new stations were built collectively; on the other hand, the village owes a lot to the fire brigade: The VFB president said: *“We are the engine for this village”*. It was put even more forcefully by the fire chief: *“Nothing happens here without us. There is no organisation like ours. Whenever something important is going on in the village, we gather up 30 men immediately”*¹⁶.

Village Women’s Society – established in 1957. There are 34 female members at present, 18 of whom sing in a peasants’ group, called “Rodakians” (Rodaczanki). The Society propagates peasants’ culture, maintaining the village traditional ceremonies. Nothing happens in the village without the Society. The “Rodakians” take care of the artistic side of the village events. The Society also presents traditional ceremonies, making handicrafts and preparing regional dishes.

“Swojacy” cabaret – stems from the Village Women’s Society and the “Rodakians” group. Its members appear during village events. They also go to other villages and take part in regional reviews, often winning prizes and distinctions.

Ms. Halina Ładoń, working both as a Klucze commune councillor and an editor at “Echo Klucz”, is the local village development animator. She is the unifying element.

The local development animator connects individual partnership members, creating a peculiar planet system revolving around the star. By no means is it enough, however, to secure the durability and cohesion of the local partnership network.

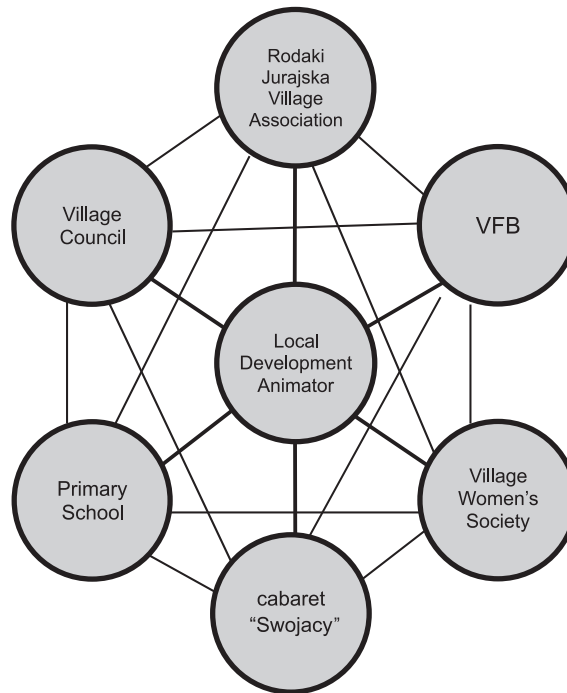
It functions properly due to the following factors:

- **complementarity** – close cooperation among people. One can hardly imagine a situation in which a village event would not be prepared by one of the organisations. Rodaki institutions complete one another, forming a final unity. Each one operates on its own ground, but none would be complete without the others. One of our respondents used an interesting metaphor to describe this phenomenon: *“our organisations form a healthy organism in which all the cells are cooperating with one another. Each cell knows exactly what to do so that the whole*

¹⁶ Interview with the VFB president.

*body functions properly, [...] they simply know where they belong [...] One action leads to another*¹⁷.

Figure 1. Scheme of the Rodaki Institutional Network



Source: authors.

- **trust** – a very important factor rendering it possible for the local network to function properly and make full use of the abovementioned complementarity. The village and its surroundings are full of trust: *“Our people tend to trust not only one another, but also outsiders. The outsiders are quite amazed at the way they are welcomed and accepted, and with time they become Rodakians and activists themselves”*¹⁸.
- **unofficial relations** – the village partnership is not a formalised structure with clear cut partner selection criteria. People meet informally – in the village head’s house or in the school director’s

¹⁷ Interview with the Association president.

¹⁸ Interview with the primary school headmaster.

office: eating cakes, drinking coffee, or sipping beer. Such relations are conducive to strengthening bonds, trust, and entrepreneurship. These relations have been aptly described by one of our respondents who had compared them with family kinship: “*We are so cordial and warm to one another. We like drinking coffee together, and visiting our neighbours. We are very open. We often share our views and interests, we meet a lot to exchange our ideas*”¹⁹.

- **collective action traditions** – the collective nature is deeply rooted in Rodaki inhabitants’ minds. It makes people act, places them in the generation chain, where they become another link of their historical tradition.
- **building bridges between generations** – projects and initiatives are constructed in such a way that work is done by children, parents and grandparents. One of the examples is a project aimed at writing the Rodaki history – children register stories told by their grandparents²⁰. The fire chief works closely with the youth²¹.
- **transparency of actions** – it is a factor greatly increasing trust for Rodaki initiative initiators, making the success more probable. The meticulous attention paid to the transparency of actions frequently causes the originators to spend their own money on executed ventures. This transparency is also related to Rodakians taking part in the decision-making processes – new ideas are always consulted with them. Without transparency, one could hardly imagine the numerous outside events, such as “Bread Day” or “Green Goose Adventure”.
- **village development strategy** – all actions initiated in Rodaki are related to the village development strategy. Its foundations were established at the end of the 1990s. The strategy has been continuously made more perfect and detailed by various initiatives. It is like a roadmap for Rodakians. This local community aspect has

¹⁹ Interview with the commune councillor who coordinates the village Local Partnership actions.

²⁰ The project resulted in a publication entitled “*Rodaki Memories – Grandparents’ history*”, Rodaki 2004.

²¹ In the Rodaki VFB, there are male and female youth teams. Young people are very active in the fire brigade actions. During commune championships, the Rodaki VFB had three teams, whereas the other commune villages had problems with setting up even one team (according to our respondents).

been referred to in literature as one of the basic conditions for creating the local community capacity²².

- **project oriented approach** – crucial to meet the community needs and solve problems. The councillor and the school master are specialists in this field. They say themselves that their abilities and habits regarding projects are one of the main reasons for Rodaki's success.

The Rodaki Local Partnership success is definitely related to the fact that actions undertaken by all the organisations are based on common norms and values out of which the reciprocation norm seems to be the most important one. It is quite general in its character – it is not just about goods and services exchange, it is something much deeper: a general reciprocation norm described in detail by Robert Putnam²³. This is how trust is created and reinforced, and cooperation made all the more available and plausible.

External Contact Network

The Rodakians have managed to construct a rich, external contact network. There are two sources of finding the partners. The first derives experiences from Rodaki leaders' backgrounds. In the past, many Rodakians would leave their village for a long time, and come back much later with new knowledge (for instance, the "Rodaki Jurajska Village" Association president).

There were others who would take up jobs in surrounding towns, and now they can use their experiences for the benefit of the village (for instance: the councillor and the school headmaster) Finally, there are people who came from the outside and brought in some new capacity (for instance: the present school headmaster's father, who was the school director himself for quite many years, or the present village head).

The second source of finding external partners is active looking for them (securing grants, inviting celebrities to village events, meetings, training courses, outside conferences) and making sure that the existing contacts thrive (invitations to important Rodaki events). This section will be limited to giving only one example: the cooperation with Ms. Kira Gałczyńska, the famous poet's daughter. The invitation sent by Rodaki

²² R.J. Chaskin, P. Brown, S. Ventatesh, A. Vidal, *Building Community Capacity*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York 2001.

²³ R. D. Putnam, *Demokracja w działaniu*, Znak, Kraków 1995, s. 267.

to her shows how the acquired external capital can influence the village functions:

- **confirmation function** – the members feel proud of their actions, they receive feedback confirming that what they are trying to do makes a lot of sense, and that their actions can be appreciated by famous people;
- **mobilisation function** – acquired partners become careful observers and reviewers who cannot be let down. They motivate the residents to work even more intensely;
- **promotional function** – Kira Gałczyńska's visit to Rodaki was related to celebrations of Gałczyński's Year in Poland. It secured a permanent place for Rodaki on the cultural map of our country and aroused a lot of media interest;
- **economic function** – choosing Kira Gałczyńska to be a patron of the "Green Goose in the Land of White Fluff" project resulted in the successful acquisition of new sponsors and funds for the village;
- **security function** – external contacts, particularly patrons respected by the general public, raise the feeling of local community security. The residents know that – should it come to a situation similar to the school closing threat – they can count on their 'patrons' to help them protect the things they cherish.

There is also a third source of external contact acquisition, which does not require the local community to make a lot of effort. It is the mass media, such as the Internet. The mass media allow outsiders to find a lot of information on Rodaki. We definitely did.

2. Human Capital Power: Local Leadership

The high level of human capital (residents' practical knowledge and abilities) lets the village develop its capacity, and reinforce the social capital. The local leadership character is of crucial importance here.

Rodaki is characterised by a special leadership type. On the one hand, it is clearly visible that the village initiatives are managed collectively, which is related to the existence of numerous social organisations. On the other hand, it would be hard not to realise that one person is the engine for the whole community. This person plays different roles in the village (being a member of every organisation), coordinating and animating the partnership activities. We are talking about the Klucze commune councillor, the originator and manager of the "Green Goose" project.

Each Rodaki organisation has its own prestige, reinforced by common, harmonised actions. Therefore, these organisations are trusted both by the local community, and by the numerous external institutions with which they cooperate. Most organisation leaders come from families in which collective work has always been a tradition. The Councillor's family traditions: her grandfather was one of the VFB initiators in 1928. Before the Second World War, when there was no school, he would teach privately at home. The councillor's father was known to all Rodakians – a fervent village chronicler, and a talented actor. His artistic performances in the village were a stimulus to create the cabaret later. Her mother established and managed the Village Women's Society, propagating various courses for women. We could give many more examples of the social activity inheritance.

These family traditions help build the prestige. But it also comes from other sources. You do not have to have a family history related to Rodaki to become an important village person and act for its benefit. If you are personally involved in solving the village problems, and supporting the regional development, you will be perceived as one of the village leaders. For example, the chairwoman of the village council came to Rodaki in the 1970s. The present school headmaster's father came to the village to be employed as a local teacher, and he quickly became one of the village change initiators. The "Rodaki Jurajska Village" Association president left the village for several years, and now she heads the organisation.

For Rodakians, it is very important to build bridges between generations. It is clearly seen in the character of executed projects which are always planned in such a way that each generation can participate in the works.

The scope of work is fairly divided. The chairwoman of the village council and the councillor coordinate and manage the village initiatives. For the last ten years, these two women have been the most important commune leaders. The councillor writes projects, and the chairwoman is responsible for coordinating works in the village. This peculiar board of directors often meets in the school teachers' room, which is also a place for various village meetings and events when they do not take place outdoors. Particular organisations' actions complement one other.

The character of mutual relations can even be observed in the language used by our respondents: "*we are inseparable; and this symbiosis has been going on for ages*"²⁴. This language reflects the

²⁴ Interview with the commune councillor.

atmosphere of partners' meetings, described as combining the nice with the useful – spending free time with friends while discussing important village issues: *“We have phones, so whenever something needs to be done, we call each other. I am always on the run, riding my bike. The village head and I take care of all the problems, we drink coffee together, invite each other to our houses. We meet very often in different places and think what else we can do for the village”*²⁵.

When characterising collective leadership in Rodaki, we must not forget about the subject present in every conversation with the residents: *“one man or two people won't be able to do anything. It must be a group”*²⁶. It sounds like a Rodaki credo. The inhabitants tend to agree with one another, and they are willing to cooperate, forming a cohesive group open to new ideas: *“I think we are quite active, and it is thanks to all our people, as we need to act in various spheres. People do want to change stuff. Our residents want to spend time with one another, and it is the main source of our success. It is not enough for them to sit in their houses all the time. They want to sing and practice together. One thing leads to another. The younger ones also want to participate in everything”*²⁷.

Collectivity is the basis for making decisions. In the village there are a lot of debates, group negotiations, and people will always look for a consensus: *“Anybody wanting to push something forward must be sure they themselves want to do it. They usually are, as most of the initiatives do not come from nowhere, but are well thought of. Everybody knows what they want to achieve, and should be prepared to convince the others”*²⁸. Our respondents often say that collective actions are caused by inner needs.

The councillor plays a special role in this partnership. She acts like an intermediary between particular organisations, supporting the Rodaki local development. Let us reiterate that she is a person involved in the actions of each organisation – as a normal member, a member of the board, a secretary, or a founder, not necessarily a head. Her position in the village is extremely strong. All the organisations want her to have some

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Interview with the chairwoman of the “Rodakians” group and the Village Women’s Society.

²⁷ Interview with the Association president.

²⁸ Interview with the primary school headmaster.

function within their structures. She is also authorised to represent Rodaki outside.

There are a few sources of her prestige: First of all, the councillor **comes from the family of rich social activity traditions**. Secondly, her exceptional position in the village results from specific **features of her character and principles by which she acts in her social undertakings**. She is an exemplary self-investment oriented animator/leader who is increasing her qualifications and abilities. She takes part in various training courses which she uses not only to acquire new knowledge, but also to establish new contacts that can be beneficial for the village development. These relations are very important for the councillor. She always does her best to participate in ventures and events to which she is invited. She is capable of transferring the acquired knowledge to other people involved in the village development, translating it to the language easily understood by all the residents. Her relations with the other village leaders are also excellent. She is in constant touch with them, their cooperation being perfect. Were it not for this cooperation, her position would definitely be weaker.

The councillor is also **able to soothe conflicts** and support new initiatives. Thanks to her charisma and laboriousness, she can push the residents to working for the common good, regardless if they concern organising an outdoor event, building a new sidewalk, or receiving financial support. She makes sure nobody is omitted in the task allocation of new initiatives. She knows how to show gratitude and respect for people's efforts. She does everything she can so that all **the actions are transparent**. It creates a great deal of trust everywhere. For instance: all the village residents are invited, once a year to the village council meeting.

They can listen to the summary of annual undertakings of individual village organisations and see how the projects have been executed and financially settled.

The councillor's involvement style is closer to social animation than pure leadership. Animators are intermediaries between residents and organisations, between the village and the outside world. Therefore, not only does the councillor create relations and networks, but also she connects them. It is important to maintain these contacts, reinforce the residents' social engagement, and inform them about planned and executed ventures, as well as to convince them to participate in the works.

3. Limitations: Cooperation with Private and Public Sectors

A serious threat to the Rodaki internal network development is the fact that, practically, there are no private sector partners. There is no support coming from small, local businesses. There are, in fact, very few people who run their own companies. There is hardly any local business in the village: *“If you want to do something, you must have some money. In other villages, more people run their own, little companies, and they are ready to give away some money. Our people are not very keen on doing that. There are 2, 3 people who will give something, and that’s it”*²⁹.

What would be needed in Rodaki is also the support offered by larger companies willing to participate in the local activities. In the past, there were some large factories (national then) which would patronise some of the village initiatives – for instance: “Wiek” (age), a cement plant from Ogrodzieniec. First, it partly sponsored the building of the Rodaki primary school, and then it was financially supporting it. Today such cooperation is not possible. In order to give money, large private capital must have perspectives of real, concrete income. The local community actions, run on a micro scale, do not attract private capital.

Local business will be interested only if local projects, such as “Green Goose in the Land of White Fluff”, will cross the village borders and reach beyond the local environment – at least into the commune or the whole province: *“It would be nice if there was somebody with an idea, initiative and money, who would deal with purchasing and processing meat, who would make visitors come to Rodaki for a nice meal of goose [local speciality]. It was the aim of our actions. Maybe, some day, we will be successful. If we had a larger group of breeders, they could definitely do a lot. There was this Japanese guy [during a conference on “Green Goose] who said he would buy any amount of feathers for processing.*

*He was a quilt and pillow producer, interested in Polish feathers. He was addressing the breeders, saying he would buy any amount. But he needed a lot of this stuff. He wanted his trucks to be packed immediately when he’d sent them over. We don’t have too many farms, and people breed geese mainly for their own needs, giving leftovers away to their neighbours”*³⁰.

²⁹ Interview with Rodaki village head.

³⁰ Interview with the Association president.

Another obstacle on the way to Rodaki local development is the lack of communal support. Theoretically, the interests of the village and local authorities are the same, but the deadlock seems to be huge and extremely difficult to eliminate. The internal relations network may be functioning well inside the village, but it is not working at all when it comes to external relations with the commune. The factors, mentioned earlier, connecting several institutions, such as complementarity, trust, unofficial character of relations, cooperation traditions, or transparency of actions have been replaced by contradictory factors:

- **lack of trust** – it is the main problem and the reason why there is no cooperation. Unfortunately, the village council's decision to close the primary school in Rodaki, or the ruined fire brigade station reconstruction manoeuvres have caused the commune to lose credibility in the eyes of higher authorities. Nobody trusts the commune anymore, and it will be very difficult for the new local management to rebuild the village reliability: *"The firemen won't return (give the building to the commune) the station, as they are afraid it will be taken away from them. [...] We have had this situation for many years now. There is a lack of trust between us and the commune. If you get disappointed one time, it's hard to regain the trust"*³¹.
- **lack of proper communication** – bad atmosphere and conflict situations cause obstacles in the information flow. Defective information policy of the commune causes its actions to be perceived as directed against the village. The residents feel discriminated against: *"We don't get pampered by the commune. There are not any sidewalks for us, except for the ones in front of the church and school, which we built ourselves, anyway [...]. We own everything here. We've done it on our own. Our parents and grandparents would never be given anything, and so we feel sorry that there was a moment when the government wanted to take stuff away from us"*³². Thus, the commune is perceived as a government that takes things away instead of providing them.
- **blocked actions and initiatives** – Rodaki frequently depends on the communal decisions. The sponsors are quite reluctant to support investments that should be paid for by the local government. And if they are ready to give some money, they expect the local community

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

to participate with their own funds, too. Their own funds can only be granted by the commune. The fact that Rodaki cannot cooperate with the commune results in some projects not being realised and sponsors' money being wasted. The Klucze commune head often complains that she learns about Rodaki initiatives too late: *"We spend lots of money. It's kind of difficult to deal with associations like Rodaki, as they write their own projects [...], and then come to the commune, when they have to pay 20% from their own funds"*³³.

- **lack of unofficial contacts** – personal relations are crucially important in small communities. They make it easier to find a job, create a climate of cooperation, build trust, and enable communication via official channels. The contacts between commune management and Rodaki leaders are limited to the level which reduces the chances for local development. Both groups do meet with one another, but usually during larger official events organised in Rodaki. The commune representatives are there because it is their duty, with interpersonal contacts being limited to official courtesies.
- **lack of common strategy** – Rodaki projects are not included in the Klucze commune development strategy. Rodakians have been trying to encourage commune authorities to become interested in their local economic activity. They have tried to discuss their issues during commune council meetings to no avail. Local authorities keep refusing to base parts of their strategy on the village ideas. There are only some obscure plans according to which the commune social welfare centre should finance the establishment of a goose breeding social cooperative.

4. Local Economic Initiative – “Green Goose in the Land of White Fluff”

The economic initiative, set up in Rodaki in 2002, results from Halina Ładoń's efforts to improve the residents' material situation and to activate the local community. The “Green Goose in the Land of White Fluff” project, submitted by the village council, has been co-financed by the Rural Development Foundation (Fundacja Wspomagania Wsi) within the framework of the “Our Remedy for Rural Poverty” programme.

³³ Interview with the Klucze commune head.

The initial part of the project execution focused on purchasing 240 goose nestlings and distributing them (free of charge) among the poorest residents. Detailed calculations on potential breeders' income (from selling meat and feathers) were prepared. A goose breeding cycle lasts 5 months. At first, small nestlings are fed with special fodder or oat. Later, they eat grass from meadows and pastures surrounding Rodaki. Out of 10 geese, a breeder can obtain 3 kg of feathers, and meat. According to preliminary calculations, a breeder can sell the feathers for PLN 200 per kilogram, which should allow him/her to buy, for instance, 2 tons of coal. Bred geese are slaughtered in the autumn. The carcass (in 2006, it was registered as a certified regional product) and feathers can then be obtained. During the season, geese are plucked three times. A well-bred goose may weigh up to 7-8 kilograms. The project calculation has been prepared in the following way³⁴:

Benefits	
Meat	1,220 goose nestlings were bought over the period of 4 years. Assuming that out of 10 geese 60 kg of meat can be produced, the residents acquired 7320 kg of meat (PLN 12 per 1 kg) PLN 87,840 zł
Feathers	1,220 goose nestlings were bought. Out of 10 nestlings, there is 4 kg of torn feathers (PLN 200 per 1 kg) PLN 97,200
Total	PLN 185,440
Costs	The amount has to be reduced by fodder costs during the initial feeding period, and oat costs for adult geese. These costs are incurred by breeders.
Fodder	one-off expense during first days for 10 geese – PLN 12
Oat	To feed 10 geese, one needs 100 kg for the whole breeding season (5 months) - PLN 35
Total	One must be prepared to pay approximately PLN 60 as all the costs, including possible medications. One adult goose pays for the whole flock of 10 geese.

This initiative combines material support and cultural-ecological elements. A Rodaki goose comes from the Zatorska breed. It is a protected species. The project is also supposed to protect the region's meadows and pastures against impoverishment. These areas need to be regularly fertilised and kept in their natural conditions. The cultural element of the project was related to the local tradition. Undertaken actions were aimed

³⁴ On the basis of Rodaki source materials – 2003.

at reviving forgotten ceremonies and goose-and-feathers customs which, in the past, had integrated Rodaki inhabitants. Even throughout the 1950s, geese were frequently bred on farms. They disappeared from the village after the residents quit their agricultural occupation.

“Green Goose” turned out to be a catchy slogan which made the village famous and attracted a lot of people and institutions. It was possible to create other projects based on the “Green Goose” slogan. This enabled the continuous inflow of goose nestlings (every year the residents were given new ones). In this way Rodaki became a thematic village. Many goose-related projects have been initiated since 2003. As we have already mentioned, 2003 was announced to be Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński’s year. This poet is the author of the famous play entitled “Green Goose”. There was a party organised under the “Green Goose” banner, and Gałczyński’s daughter – Kira – was contacted. The contact was fruitful: Ms. Gałczyńska supported the village in many difficult initiatives. The village acquired funds for other projects: the reconstruction of the historic 16th-century church bell tower; the publication of a book containing memories of the village elderly. Children were producing handmade paper from scrap materials in after school classes. The paper had a “Green Goose” logo. The village published a postcard promoting its “Green Goose in the Land of White Fluff”. In 2006, it held a conference entitled “A Goose on the Table, in Literature, and the Environment”.

The “Green Goose” theme gained prominence in Poland and abroad. In 2003, the project was awarded the second prize in a UNDP competition – “Poverty vs. Environment – Mutual Connotations”. It was the only one of 150 projects from Małopolska region sent to the competition. “Green Goose” was estimated as a “model, practical solution combining fight against poverty with environment protection”³⁵. A lot of journalists visited the village. Polish TV (TVP 1) broadcasted a report on Rodaki, and even German newspapers touched upon the topic. In 2004, “Green Goose” delighted jurors of the “European Village Renewal Prize 2004” competition – first on the province level and later on the European level. In 2004, the project was highly valued by jurors of the “Polish Heritage Award” as a precious countryside initiative related to heritage, cultural, and environmental protection.

This is how the jury justified its decision: “In Rodaki, a group of enthusiastically minded people managed to spur all the village residents

³⁵ See: www.jurajskawioskarodaki.prv.pl/konkursy.

to creative actions and new initiatives. Having magnificent projects at their disposal, Rodakians are learning to take a grip on fate and control their difficult material situation. They are on the right track now. They are bound for long-term and comprehensive development”³⁶.

The “Green Goose” project has become a breakthrough moment in the history of the village. Thanks to a good idea, established external contacts, and numerous distinctions, the project has become a symbol of Rodaki activity. Today it is perceived as a model to follow in regard to ecology, culture, entrepreneurship, and local development. A huge energy shot, received by Rodaki due to the project “side effects” – promotion, interest of many institutions and the media – has changed the way people think and feel about their future. Village leaders have begun building the new Rodaki image – making use of the “Green Goose” accomplishments. They are trying to continue goose breeding in the village, even though the interest seems to be fading: *“Someone might say that we are trying to push things. We don’t want it to be lost. There are fewer and fewer breeders. Still, we want to have a few geese around, as it is the symbol of our success”*³⁷.

The “Green Goose” project shows the strength of its social embeddedness. Like all of the other historical ventures undertaken in Rodaki, this project was initiated at the bottom, with a big involvement of residents, as an answer to real needs. What proves how much the initiative has been embedded socially? First of all, “Green Goose” is an idea showing how to help poor village residents and spur them to action and entrepreneurship. Second of all, the recipients of produced goods – feathers, meat, integration actions – are the inhabitants of surrounding villages. Therefore, the products are reaching the local market. Thirdly, all the village institutions are involved in the project, each one being responsible for certain aspects of the venture. While new ideas were being realised, a new division of work was established. All the institutions and individuals in Rodaki know what they should be doing. The residents feel important, needed, and respected, seeing themselves as part of a larger whole. It should be remembered that all the new ventures are consulted with the villagers.

Project decision consultations are not the only activities characterised by embeddedness. The same characteristic feature can be applied to actions aimed at evoking interest in the villagers and encouraging them to

³⁶ Competition jury information – www.rodaki.pl.

³⁷ Interview with the village councillor.

be involved in other initiatives, organised by the leaders. The residents are informed about every activity individually and during various meetings. It happens that villagers are convinced by less conventional methods – for instance by sticking pieces of paper to their fences in case they are not home when one of the leaders is visiting the houses. There was even a scientific conference, organised in Rodaki, during which the villagers were convinced by biotechnologists of the economic-social benefits of the “Green Goose” initiative.

The project “Green Goose” is based on social embeddedness – the renewal of the custom of ‘plucking’. It is mainly when women meet to pluck the feathers of the goose. Not only do they help each other, but they also spend time together. Rodaki was an example for other commune villages which also started to undertake actions aimed at the local development, supported additionally by the Klucze commune head. Various initiatives regarding the integration of village generations are also deeply socially embedded. Rodakians know how to combine the traditions of the past with the present. Different generations are involved in executing interesting projects. It is possible for the elderly to pass their knowledge to the youth, which integrates the inhabitants even more.

The social dimension of the “Green Goose” roots is more important than the economic one. The project is not financially beneficial in real terms. It just allows households to have a bit more money. There are fewer and fewer breeders. In 2007, there were only 150 geese on 10 Rodaki farms. The scale of this venture is too small to arouse a real local economic exchange. Rodaki geese breeders are usually older people who are afraid to risk taking loans. This initiative could be truly developed only in terms of scale effect. The village would need serious support either from local businesses (which it does not receive), or from the commune. Willing to use the capacity and fame brought to the commune by the “Green Goose” initiative, the Klucze based Commune Social Welfare Centre is planning to set up a goose breeding social cooperative. It seems that only such an external intervention could cause the analysed project to result in serious financial benefits, to attract investors, and buyers of meat and feathers. The Małopolska local product – the Zatorska goose carcass – is more of a Rodaki showcase, popular during local entrepreneurship markets, than a real source of income for the village.

5. Development Perspectives Valuation

All the villagers in Rodaki know where they should be headed. The development of their community should be based on the famous trademark – the “Green Goose”. Nobody really hopes there will be more goose breeders in the future. It is all about using the symbol: “*We don’t want to waste the thing thanks to which Rodaki has been advertised. It must go in some wise direction*”³⁸. The villagers have some ideas what to do in the future and how to use properly the social capital of the village. Rodaki should become a thematic countryside based on the “Green Goose”. The symbolism of the famous project still gives a lot of opportunities. Another idea is to create an ecological museum – an outdoor educational centre which could be visited by students and tourists. It is a positive and optimistic sign that a lot of young people seem to be interested in the continuation of the project and initiating other actions on its basis, which creates a chance for a long-term local development.

Rodaki is a powerful village characterised by community capacity and a long tradition of civic actions. Its residents have lived through difficult times, which has reinforced their unity. This internal strength will not be enough, however, for the economic initiative (which has made the village famous) to develop on its own in the future. With no serious support from the local government, the Rodaki exemplary project has no chance of surviving in the long run. The villagers and local authorities need to renew their cooperation, so that they can define together notions such as “trust”, and “cooperation”. It is a great opportunity for the whole commune to reinforce its capacity.

³⁸ Interview with the Association president.

Kamila Hernik, Paulina Sobiesiak

Sewing the World for Children – The “Old School” Social Cooperative in Prostki¹

1. Foundation of the Social Cooperative in Prostki

In the following article, we will discuss the founding and subsequent activity of a social cooperative in the village of Prostki near the town of Ełk in the Voivodeship of Warmia and Mazuria in the northeastern region of Poland. The social cooperative, the Vocational Training Centre “Old School” Social Cooperative (in this text we will use the short version of the name “Old School”), was established in 2007 as part of the project entitled “Toward a Polish Model of Social Economy – Building a New Lisków”, which was funded through the EQUAL Initiative².

¹ The article is an English version of the paper published in Polish as: K. Hernik, P. Sobiesiak, *Uszyjemy świat dla dzieci – spółdzielnia “Stara Szkoła” w Prostkach*, in: T. Kaźmierczak (ed.), *W poszukiwaniu strategii pobudzania oddolnego rozwoju wiejskich społeczności*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008, pp. 99-118 (Editors’ note).

² The project was established by a partnership between the Institute of Public Affairs (the publisher of this publication), the Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland, and the Working Community of Associations of Social Organisations – WRZOS; 39 other institutions and organisations joined the project and formed four local partnerships. One of these was the local partnership in Ełk, which included: the District Starosty in Ełk, the District Roads Authority in Ełk, the Poviast Labour Office in Ełk, the District Centre of Family Support in Ełk, the Prostki Commune Office, the Elk Commune Office, the Association of Friends of the Disabled “Przystań”, Union of the Associations for the Support of the Disabled – “Pomost”, the Common Heritage Social and Cultural Society, and the Ełk Chamber of Commercial – Ełk Economic Forum.

The following article is based on the results of a study that was completed during the abovementioned project³ and in which we participated. The study was carried out in local communities where social enterprises were created; among them was the village of Prostki⁴. It was completed in three phases, which allowed us to capture the process of establishing an enterprise and the resulting changes in the community. The case study of Prostki was documented through 25 interviews with people⁵ who were involved in the founding and functioning of the “Old School”. Documents related to the creation of the enterprise, including the business plan and mission statement (cited below in the table), were a valuable source of information for the study. We present the “Old School” as an institution that is “embedded in the local community”, emerging from the community and orienting its activity for the good of the community. We view local embeddedness as an important aspect of social enterprises. We also devote considerable attention to the mission of the social cooperative, which is focused on social reintegration of marginalised persons and we thus analyse the changes taking place within the cooperative members after having taken on paid employment.

The village of Prostki, where the “Old School” is located, has a population of 2 500 and lies several kilometres from the town of Ełk. Formally, it is a village, but its residents consider it to be a small town. Prostki was previously a state collective farm⁶, and thus it is impoverished and has few residents with higher education. Between 2005 and 2007, a large part of the youth emigrated to work in Western European countries. At the time that the project was beginning several family enterprises were functioning in the village. From the accounts of interviewees and especially the community development worker, it seems that the residents were not inclined to work together. “*There are*

³ The research team worked independently of the administrative team of the project. The opinions and conclusions contained in this document are the authors’ and are not an official statement of the project administrator.

⁴ A total of seven social enterprises were created during the project in four Poviats in the Eastern part of Poland.

⁵ The quotations from the interviews appear in the text in italics and the official position of individual respondents is noted. In accordance with the code of conduct for field research, the interviews are not cited by the name of the respondent because the respondents did not authorise release of their names. The cited responses were slightly altered by the editors for the purposes of this publication before they were translated into English (Editor’s note).

⁶ State Collective Farms (PGR – *Państwowe Gospodarstwo Rolne*) were modelled after Soviet state-owned farming cooperatives (editor’s note).

little groups; each one has his own world”, was the description of the president of the “Old School” cooperative. People were hostile toward each other, did not know each other or meet and spend time together. Residents did not participate in the community life of the village and were rather passive receivers of the activities organised by the local government administration.

It was in this context that in 2005 the possibility to found a social cooperative in Prostki arose. This opportunity became real and concrete in 2006 when the Local Partnership in Elk, including the local government administration of Prostki, recruited unemployed people, twelve of whom were to be employed in the social enterprise that was being created in the village.

The “Old School” was formally registered in January 2007, though it began its activities in October 2007. The cooperative provides goods and services through a tailoring-shoemaking workshop and an education workshop. Activities run in the education workshop include renting space for events both to local residents and for commercial use by external clients (e.g. employee integration and training workshops organised by businesses). The social cooperative is also planning to open up a memorial hall and a rehabilitation workshop. The cooperative will supplement its activities and its sources of income by renting rooms to tourists in the attic of the cooperative office, which is currently being renovated for this purpose⁷. However, the tailoring workshop is of key significance to the cooperative, and thus we will focus on this element of the cooperative’s activities in the following article. The tailoring workshop produces large format educational toys for children between the ages of three and six and offers tailoring services for the residents of Prostki.

The “Old School” is a social enterprise that is focused on the professional and social reintegration of people who are marginalised on the labour market. In 2003 when The Act on Social Employment came into life⁸ over 100 social employment institutions were created. The members and later the employees of the “Old School” are people who were long-term unemployed. Polish law stipulates that at least 80% of the employees of social cooperatives must be people who need support with

⁷ If this idea is realised, the cooperative will fill in a gap on the local labour market because there is no hotel or motel in Prostki.

⁸ The Act on Social Employment (introduced on the 13th of June 2003) allowed for the creation of social cooperatives based on the model of Italian Type B social cooperatives (Editor’s note).

social and professional reintegration (see the box below). In February 2008, the cooperative employed 11 people (including the president and the professional tailoring trainer – they were the only employees of the cooperative who did not have an unemployment status). Ten of the cooperative's employees are women. The Executive Board comprises three persons: the president of the board, the accountant, and one employee of the cooperative.

The cooperative is located in the building of an old elementary school⁹, which was the inspiration for the name of the enterprise: "Old School" is meant to have positive connotations (and it seems that it does) such as "old" which means "solid/reliable", producing high quality products, and it is meant to convey that the cooperative is "ours".

Social Cooperatives

Social cooperatives are regulated by the Act on Social Cooperatives (introduced on the 27th of April 2006) and the Act on Social Employment (2003). The Act defines how to establish a cooperative, manage its activities and collaborate with other institutions as well as how to close down a social cooperative.

A social cooperative is a special kind of workers' cooperative that is based on the principle that its members mutually provide employment services for each other. It is an association of people who have partial ownership of the enterprise; the members have the right to decide about the direction of development of the enterprise. The cooperative is managed democratically based on the principle: "one person, one vote".

The social cooperative functions for the:

- Social reintegration of its members, which includes activities aiming to rebuild and maintain the skills needed to participate in the local community and to fulfill social roles at work and at home;
- Professional reintegration of its members, including activities designed to rebuild and maintain the individual capacity to function on the labour market.

⁹ This location of the cooperative created many problems. The school building is over 1300 m² in size. The costs of maintaining such a large space were too high for the cooperative. Although it used less than half of the building (the remaining part of the building was being renovated), it was required to pay the maintenance costs of the entire building. In January 2008, the cooperative became the manager of the building. The local government administration became the distributor of the locale and agreed to take over some of the costs of maintenance. Thus, the local government is currently responsible for guaranteeing the heating of the building and the cooperative pays proportionally for the costs of the space that it uses. This is the optimal solution to what was the largest problem for the cooperative and great cause of concern in terms of the cooperative's ability to survive on the market.

Besides its business activity, the social cooperative can engage in social activity and cultural-educational activity to benefit its members and the local community. It can also carry out socially beneficial activities as defined in the Public Benefit and Volunteer Work Act (introduced on the 24th of April 2003). This means that social cooperatives can submit offers for contracts to deliver public services in the same way that non-governmental organisations can (according to the abovementioned act strictly private sector institutions do not qualify to carry out such work). The social cooperative is thus an institution that links characteristics of an enterprise and a non-governmental organisation.

The “Old School” cooperative was founded and is able to carry out its activity thanks to the involvement of many people and institutions, which can be considered “significant others”¹⁰. They greatly influence the shape and activity of the cooperative. Leaders of other membership organisations and institutions in the Ełk Local Partnership were “significant others”. It should be mentioned that the role of the partnership changed with time. The period when the Partnership was most visibly active was above all during the beginning phase of the project¹¹ – it was then that the local partners were the most engaged in the cooperative’s work. During the project, the Partnership played an **important supportive role for the cooperative**, first by defining the mission statement and the type of activity that the enterprise would engage in, as well as its legal status and employment capacity. The partnership also helped by recruiting the unemployed people who would work in the enterprise, organising trainings and study visits for them, and finally by holding the cooperative accountable for its activities both in terms of its finances and the quality of its social activity. As it turned out, however, the local partners were not able to help the cooperative employees take on the role of cooperative shareholders, or co-owners of the enterprise. An external advisor to the Local Partnership in Ełk took on this task.

¹⁰ We refer here to the sociological category of “significant other” as defined by P. Berger, N. Luckmann, in P. Berger., T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Anchor Books, Garden City, NY 1966. A large majority of “significant others” are people who, in social economy terms, are called social enterprise shareholders.

¹¹ The local government elections in 2006 were a decisive moment, which resulted in the election of the former leader of the local partnership, the starost of the Ełk Poviát, as the mayor of the town. The project coordinator also left the project to join the new mayor within the public administration. From that moment, the partnership lacked a clear leader who would be a link between the different activities that were taking place. In the later phase of the project, communication with the partnership was maintained through the cooperative and not directly with the partnership as such.

The community development worker, whose responsibility in the project was to activate the local community and prepare it for the founding of the social cooperative in Prostki, was also a “significant other”¹². Nevertheless, the community development worker’s activities de facto exceeded this role. Because he was also employed by the District Office in Elk¹³, the community development worker linked the enterprise with the Local Partnership. He informed the cooperative members about the possibilities of submitting applications for grants or about trainings that “Old School” employees could participate in. Along with the Local Partnership, the community development worker organised a study visit for the cooperative members as well as trainings in patchwork sewing. The lack of a precise definition for the role of the community worker and a certain lack of understanding about his responsibilities led to a situation where the Local Partnership considered giving the community worker the position of president of the “Old School” cooperative¹⁴.

Through the community development worker’s informal contacts¹⁵, a consultant arrived to Prostki in the summer of 2007 to advise the cooperative. The consultant played a **mediating role in establishing contacts between the cooperative and outside partners, advised on a marketing strategy, and helped integrate and motivate the cooperative members**. The consultant helped outline and implement a marketing strategy for the cooperative, and searched for contacts, service providers and potential clients for the cooperative’s products. Through the consultant’s initiative, the cooperative’s activities, which initially were too broad and not well suited to the context of the local market, changed and were strategically reoriented to focus on the production of large format educational toys¹⁶. The consultant also put the cooperative in contact with

¹² The responsibilities and type of work of the community development worker are presented in T. Kaźmierczak’s article entitled “A Model of Community Development Work with Impoverished Rural Communities” in this publication (Editors’ note).

¹³ The tasks involved with the project realisation allowed for simultaneous part-time employment in public administration.

¹⁴ It should be noted that the president of the social cooperative does not have to be a member of the cooperative. In most social cooperatives, the president is hired from outside of the cooperative by the cooperative manager.

¹⁵ The Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland and the Institute of Public Affairs covered the costs of the consultant’s work with funding from the project.

¹⁶ Initially, it was planned that, as an enterprise working in several branches, the cooperative would offer such services as repairing household appliances, tailoring and shoe-making, landscaping, as well as souvenir production. This breadth of activities indicated a lack of knowledge about the local market.

a toy designer (a professional artist), who gave the idea for what would become the standard product of the cooperative: an educational wall hanging “Four Seasons of the Year”¹⁷. The cooperative’s consultant also prepared key documents for the cooperative and in a large part, prepared the cooperative members and the management for the specificities of work in the “Old School”. The consultant thus had many responsibilities in the cooperative as a **mentor and specialist**, but also as a **friend**. It is also important that the consultant’s presence at the “Old School”¹⁸ fostered a feeling of certainty in the success of the cooperative and reduced the moments when the cooperative members doubted the purpose of their work. It was also the consultant who helped the cooperative members enter the role of employees/co-owners of the enterprise. For the further functioning of the “Old School” after the completion of the project, it was important that the consultant did not take on the role of cooperative manager. Instead, the consultant focused on strengthening the position of the person who the cooperative members chose as the president for the longer term¹⁹.

The change of the person who functioned as cooperative president (and the occasional vacancies) during the first phase of the “Old School’s” work indicated how difficult it was to manage such a body in which the employees were learning how to work together. There were many sources of frustration and conflict between the employees, including a different level of tailoring skills. Some of them were waiting for work in the rehabilitation workshop. The cooperative members had great freedom to work autonomously, but when needed, taking decisions collectively was challenging and anguishing for them. It was often easier for them to accept and implement decisions taken by the management than to collectively initiate an activity or a discussion. The cooperative members expected support and help because they felt insecure in their new situation of employment, but this also caused differences of opinion between them and tension in the relations between employees and management. For example, each cooperative member wanted to take advantage of the right to decide about the purchase of goods for toy production; meanwhile, a specific group was selected to be responsible

¹⁷ The wall hanging consists of moveable elements representing different seasons of the year (e.g. leaves, insects, grass, the sun), which are attached to the wall hanging with buttons and string.

¹⁸ Beginning with July 2007, the consultant spent around two weeks a month in Prostki for the duration of around nine months.

¹⁹ The president is not a member of the cooperative.

for this task in the name of the cooperative and this led to conflicts. It is important, however, that the cooperative members felt like they were part of a collective and mutually supportive of each other: *“we are doing this together from the beginning, there are no bad attitudes dragging behind us...we’ve created a sort of atmosphere, a sort of structure and way of thinking, so that things are pretty good. It’s a good situation...we like going to work”*.

Employing an instructor for the tailoring workshop in effect strengthened the position of the management-level employees in the cooperative because the instructor became the only person who had real qualifications as a tailor. The instructor began to direct the organisation of the work, distinguished specific tasks and structured them into a logical sequence, and so played the role of an informal brigadier-leader. As a result, she quickly gained authority among the cooperative members, which sometimes complicated the relationship between the president and the employees because the employees perceived the instructor as the real manager of the cooperative.

A lack of skills among the cooperative members, a sense of insecurity, fears about the future, but also a lack of a division of labour significantly influenced the effectiveness of enterprise management in the beginning phase of its development. The president of the “Old School” remarked that: *“sometimes we come to the girls and ask ‘what’s up?’ and suddenly there is silence. ‘What do you need?’ we ask; ‘Nothing but a good attitude and optimism,’ they respond”*. In such situations of doubt and resignation, the cooperative members read aloud the cooperative’s mission, which they themselves wrote with the support of the consultant. The mission statement is important in strengthening a sense of community, building interpersonal links between cooperative members, and creating a collective identity for the enterprise²⁰. The mission statement outlines the main goals of the social cooperative; it emphasises the goal of the professional and social reintegration of cooperative members, a democratic decision-making process, and institutional autonomy (see the box below).

²⁰ The mission was read publicly for the first time on the opening day of the cooperative, after Sunday morning mass during a special ceremony nearby the point marking the historical frontier between Poland, Lithuania and Prussia.

The Cooperative’s Mission Statement

The mission of the cooperative is to work for the common good, that is for the good of the cooperative members, our village, region and nation. We provide services and produce goods, and engage in trade in accordance with the highest traditions and with due respect to people’s labour, partners and clients in order to improve and confirm the positive image of the “Old School”. We are a free association of people open to new members. We respect the history of the land that we come from and spread knowledge about it to others. Important decisions are made in an open and democratic manner. We are proud of our autonomy and self-governance. By meeting in this place, we promise to build a bigger and better home founded upon the values of truth, sincerity, pride and sacrifice. We create the “Old School” and it creates us. We are not indifferent to poverty, the harm done to humanity, and human weakness. We approach the problems of the cooperative and its members with whom we work and live with care. We direct our interests, capacity and energy to improve in particular the education and holistic development of children and youth.

2. Economic Efficiency of the Social Cooperative

The production of educational toys was thoroughly considered before it became a key element of the cooperative’s activity. First, this is a unique type of product, which allows the cooperative to have clients beyond the local market. It also does not require that the products be ideally identical, which is significant when the cooperative employees do not have high tailoring skills. One can also use different materials for production (including scrap material, etc.). Moreover, this kind of activity enables the cooperative to avoid expensive intermediaries in product sales: pre-schools are easy to identify and their addresses can be found through the Internet. It is also important that in this type of work the cooperative can sub-contract local specialists to prepare the precise, small elements of the toys (e.g. elements that are attached to the wall hangings), which relieves cooperative members from the monotonous and difficult task and makes production more efficient²¹. Simultaneously, it is important for the social embedding process of the enterprise because it allows cooperative members to establish partnership relations with local residents, who contribute to the cooperative²². Moreover, the cooperative can offer

²¹ The cost of work of the cooperative members turned out to be relatively high: what should have taken 480 work hours to produce actually took 780. There was an effort to increase the cooperative efficiency and thus selected elements of the production were sub-contracted at lower production costs.

²² There are many people in the local community who contribute to the production of clothing firms.

pre-schools, which are the cooperative's main clients, other products that are necessary for their work and ones that require creative and innovative thinking rather than ideal repetition and precise tailoring skills.

No less significant for the economic efficiency of the cooperative is creative contribution of the designer, who occasionally visits the "Old School" and proposes new ideas for toys (which are distinctly original and colourful). The uniqueness of these products means that there is no need to specifically search for potential clients. In November 2007, the "Old School" sold its first four toys (the abovementioned large format educational wall hangings) to local pre-schools. By March 2008, it was already difficult for the cooperative to keep up with the demand. Promotional activities were continued, mostly through the involvement of the consultant. The consultant, along with the cooperative members, made a presentation of the products for selected pre-schools, both public and private. A promotional folder was prepared with description of the "Old School's" main products. Also a website was created: www.stara-szkola.org.pl.

In addition to cooperation with local tailors as subcontractors, the cooperative developed contacts with local producers of raw materials that were needed for the toy production. The cooperative has not yet established partner relations with local stores and boutiques, mostly as a result of how different the cooperative's products are from other producers.

At the current phase of development, it is difficult to estimate the economic success of the cooperative in the longer term. It seems, though, that the unique idea of producing large format educational toys in the tailoring workshop offers a significant opportunity for the success of the enterprise. It remains open to question how the cooperative will carry on its work after the consultant leaves because it was the consultant who was the main source of inspiration, ideas and ultimately responsible for the realisation of promotional and marketing activity of the "Old School". The first months of entirely independent activity will most likely decide about the future perspectives of the enterprise. The vision for the future development of the "Old School" after completion of the project remains to be defined. The cooperative members have many ideas, but there are no concrete plans for their implementation.

It is worth noting that in accordance with the EQUAL funded project's plans, after the project is completed (in April 2008), the promotional work of the social cooperative is to be supported by the Socio-Economic Association "Partner", which will have been created as

a part of the project by two institutions from the Local Partnership in Ełk and two social cooperatives in Golubie²³ and in Prostki. When we were completing the last phase of the study, this Association was only being registered²⁴ and thus it was uncertain what kind of specific supportive activities it would carry out.

3. Embedding the Enterprise in the Local Community

The community in Prostki is rather closed to outsiders and not welcoming of change. After 1989 during the local elections, support was given mostly to “tested and proven people”, that is people who are local, well-known, and considered “ours”, even if these people did not make a positive contribution to the local history. In evaluating the society in Prostki, the community development worker found several socially active people, but they worked in isolation and did not capitalise on their potential by working together. Social capital and especially its “weaker” version of bridging capital, which builds links between different social groups, practically do not exist in Prostki. There is no mutual trust among the residents.

The cooperative, which was the legal form of an enterprise that was adopted for the “Old School”, turned out to be foreign to many people and aroused negative associations with the communist period among some residents. As one of the representatives of the Local Partnership in Ełk stated: *“State collective farms taught us that if it belonged to the state, then it belong to no one; so if it’s a social cooperative, who does it belong to?”* When it turned out that the cooperative was to be created by people who were socially marginalised and long-term unemployed, the idea was treated as a joke and the residents mocked it. The community development worker summarised the general attitude in the following way: *“the social rejects are doing something that will probably be a failure”*. Thus, the environment in which the cooperative emerged was not supportive.

Moreover, the people who were designated to work in the cooperative by the Poviast Labour Office faced a great challenge because the project was delayed for eight months during the beginning phase. During this

²³ The Local Partnership in Ełk established two social cooperatives: the “Old School” in Prostki and another in the village of Golubie (located around 15 km from Ełk).

²⁴ The Association was being registered at the time of the preparation of this publication (Editor’s note).

time, the more active among the people who were recruited to work in the cooperative found other employment, others left the project because they did not understand the idea of the cooperative, or feared losing their unemployment status and ultimately did not join the initiative.

According to the project plans, the Local Partnership in Ełk, which included the Prostki commune head, was to support the process of embedding the cooperative in the local community. As mentioned earlier, the change of the project coordinator in the local government weakened the involvement and level of collaboration between the local partner institutions. Thus, in addition to the unsupportive social environment, there were significant changes taking place within the Local Partnership, which did not facilitate the embedding of the “Old School” cooperative in the community. On the other hand, the work of the consultant was important in slowing down the process of disembedding the cooperative. From this perspective, a visit from a journalist from the women’s weekly, “NAJ” in August 2007, who wrote an article about enterprising women in Prostki, gave the cooperative members a sense of faith and comfort²⁵. The media’s interest in the Prostki cooperative warmed the attitudes of Prostki residents toward the cooperative and even prompted the first expression of interest toward it, which is significant for the process of embedding.

The location of the cooperative in the building where a school once functioned was also significant. The cooperative members rightly assumed that the name “Old School” would have positive connotations for the residents, many of whom studied in the building and looked back fondly at their childhood years in the school. As one employee of the Local Cultural Centre remarked, when the cooperative was established, the residents looked at it positively because they thought that the *“old school building will be revived and will no longer be falling to ruin, something will be happening in it, the building will be renovated and people will be satisfied”*. As mentioned earlier, a positive image of the “Old School” was also the effect of the marketing campaign: it symbolised the good quality of products offered by the cooperative.

The ceremonial opening of the enterprise, which took place on the 7th of October 2007, was also very important for embedding the cooperative in the community. Everyone who doubted the establishment of the cooperative could see the concrete effects of the work of the cooperative members such as examples of the large format toys and the “Four seasons

²⁵ <http://www.naj.kobieta.pl>

of the year” wall hangings. The cooperative members worked very hard, often into the late evening hours, in order to prepare the exhibit of products for the opening. Prostki residents were also attracted to the cooperative by an exhibit of old photographs depicting life around the school, which was the idea of one employee of the Local Cultural Centre (Gminny Ośrodek Kultury – GOK) and the community development worker, who was the founder of the newly created Association for Social Initiatives “Our Prostki” (Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Społecznych ‘Nasze Prostki’). An employee of the GOK became the president of the Association. The exhibit gave Prostki residents the opportunity to reminisce about “old times”, and in this way the cooperative was positively written into the residents’ consciousness.

The cooperative can become a place of growth for a local civil society in Prostki because the village residents have nowhere to meet. The GOK is not popular among the residents (its activities are aimed mostly toward children). The cooperative can fill this gap. The Association “Our Prostki” holds meetings in the “Old School”, sometimes for a small, select group of people but also for all residents and their guests. Some cooperative members are also members of the Association. The cooperative rented a room to residents at a low cost for a New Year’s Eve party (and it is possible to organise other social events there), and it also rents rooms for English language lessons. In such a way, the “Old School” reaches out to the community with offers for practical and useful services. Particularly significant is the idea to organise a memorial hall in the building, which will be the effect of the residents’ own contribution of old furniture, family memorabilia, family histories, art and photography. This project will help create a common vision of the local history, strengthen emotional bonds within the community, which is particularly significant for regions in the Mazuria area where the residents are mostly immigrants who do not have a long common history upon which to build a collective identity. The president of the cooperative revealed that there is an idea to organise history lessons and *“for example for the teachers and children to come and depending on the lesson topic, for the cooperative to offer examples that would bring the topic closer to the children”*. (In such a way, there would be a symbolic exchange between the “new” school the “old” school). There are also plans to open a café in the basement of the “Old School”, which would offer catering services as well as the idea that was mentioned earlier, of renting rooms in the attic of the building. Clearly, the cooperative has many plans for how to open itself up to the residents and embed its activity in the community.

The community development worker played an important role in embedding the cooperative in the community. In accordance with the plans for the project “Building a New Lisków”, opening a social enterprise was an operational goal while a strategic goal was activating and developing selected communities in the Eastern regions of Poland. Activating the community was the goal of four community development workers, one of whom worked in Prostki (and a second village near Ełk-Golubie). The community development worker’s activities involved developing the residents’ capacity to organise, create networks of cooperation and mutual trust. From the very beginning, the community development worker cooperated closely with the GOK. As a result of the involvement of one of the employees of that institution, the GOK became the point of entry for further collective activities. The first was the Academy of Young Media Leaders, an educational project directed toward young people from the local community. As part of the project, middle school youth were trained in the basics of journalism and web design. The website, www.naszeprostki.pl, was created and visited by over 50,000 people during its first six months. The success of this initiative gave other ideas for projects. In September 2007, the Association for Social Initiatives “Our Prostki” was created with the goal of promoting social engagement among the local residents “with a particular emphasis on promoting activities in the field of education, culture, tourism, and enterprise”²⁶. The activities of the Association are mostly focused on work with youth, although not exclusively. It has become an intermediary between the cooperative and the local community, a communication channel for the exchange of information and ideas between the two sides about what can be done for the benefit of Prostki. The Association enabled the community development worker to reach the school-aged youth, and through the youth the community worker could reach the parents.

In this context, the significance of the employee of the GOK (the president of the Association “Our Prostki” at the same time) is particularly great. She is a sort of discovery of the community development worker, a real community leader who is well oriented in the village. She has lived in Prostki since birth, has wide contacts in the community, is involved, takes part in trainings and participates in the creation of a local strategy for the development of the NGO sector in Ełk. Through her volunteerism in the newly created Association and her cooperation with the community development worker, she became an important figure in the community.

²⁶ Cited from the webpage: <http://www.nasze-prostki.pl/stowarzyszenie>

It appears that she has become a natural leader who through her activity creates opportunities for the involvement and integration of community residents as well as for further embedding the social cooperative in the community. She consistently confirms that the Association makes an effort to financially support the “Old School”: *“the cooperative gives us access to space at no cost. And if there will be projects and money, then of course the cooperative will receive a portion of the money because we don’t want to give it to anyone else, only to the cooperative. For now, we meet in the cooperative as guests and it’s nice this way...but I understand that if we will have the capacity than we will pay for everything”*.

As a result of the activities of the cooperative, including those carried out in collaboration with the Association “New Prostki”, the social reception of the “Old School” changed to become more open – in essence, all of our respondents indicated a growing interest in the cooperative and in what is happening in the “Old School”. Progressively, there are clients who are interested in benefiting from the services of small tailoring jobs. The president of the cooperative noticed that: *“they saw that from the pile of rubbish that we started from, we created clean walls with chairs, a place where they can talk in peace...where they can make Xerox copies... where they can have their trousers tailored...that we are doing something to benefit the pre-school. They see that something is being built rather than ruined”*. The cooperative has become a recognisable place and it appears that it is becoming a “local” place, in contrast to the situation in the middle of 2007 when, as the community development worker recounts, *“the cooperative did not function as an autonomous institution, but as a project, which means ‘not ours’, external to Prostki”*. News about the changing attitudes toward the cooperative within the Prostki community reached members of the Local Partnership in Elk. The representative of one institution in the partnership remarked that: *“you can feel this sort of intense observation, but now it is favourable, as if people believe that maybe something will actually work out. Just half a year ago, it was impossible to imagine that someone could look so positively at [the cooperative], they would just say ‘What are those stupid women doing?’”*.

In other words, the “Old School” cooperative, which was an institution created by external agents in the form of the Elk Local Partnership with the support and engagement of people like the community development worker, the president of the Association “Our Prostki” and the consultant, is now perceived by Prostki residents as “ours”.

Each institution in the Local Partnership in Elk played a role in creating the cooperative, which allowed the cooperative to capitalise on

the existing local networks. The consultant however, was the first to use his existing contacts and to develop new ones in order to promote and establish the “Old School” on the local market. The consultant as well as the tailoring instructor, who led the first patchwork training sessions, also came from outside of Prostki and learned about the cooperative from the community development worker. Thus, external links played a larger role in the process of promoting the cooperative than local contacts. Simultaneously, the cooperative has enabled the creation of a new network of links in Prostki. Below we shall take a closer look at the contacts that the cooperative created.

The cooperative decided to produce large format toys and to distribute them directly to pre-schools throughout Poland. This approach was chosen in order to avoid costly intermediaries. The suppliers of materials for toy production were found through the Internet and through informal contacts. A local sculptor in Prostki designed the cooperative’s logo and the cooperative plans to continue working with him on developing the souvenirs workshop and memorial hall. Although the toys were produced with plans to sell them to pre-schools throughout Poland, the first educational toys were sold on the local market to pre-schools in Ełk. Clients of the souvenirs workshop, however, will be tourists; while those visiting the memorial hall will include both tourists and locals.

From the perspective of embedding the cooperative in the community, the decision to sub-contract local tailors to produce the decorative elements for the “Four Seasons of the Year” wall hanging was exceptionally important. This arrangement relieves “Old School” employees from a monotonous and labour-intensive task, which they cannot complete efficiently and which thus reduces the costs of production. Developing this cooperation guarantees additional income for the residents who are engaged in the tailoring work and it thus stimulates the economic activity on the local market. This approach also depicts how the development of the cooperative is accomplished through cooperation rather than competition with other institutions on the local market. The president of the cooperative stated that: *“it works not on the basis of undercutting someone, but on the basis of partnership and mutual help”*. The cooperative indeed has many plans for collaboration with other institutions. For example, the cooperative established collaborative relations with a warehouse in the neighboring city of Ełk as well as with one in Białystok, a regional capital 100 km away from Prostki as well as with a warehouse in Warsaw.

The cooperatives activities, which were meant to help it develop as an institution, also influenced changes in the functioning of the commune

of Prostki. The two new institutions – the “Old School” cooperative and the Association “Our Prostki” – work toward the important social goal of local community integration. People appeared in the Prostki community who were important not because of the power that they held but because of what they do and how it works to benefit the community. Thus, civil society structures were established alongside the local government. In the near future, this will most certainly contribute to cross-sectoral cooperation, which is important for local democracy. The commune head in the village of Prostki has already noticed the changes taking place as a result of the cooperative and the association: *“I cannot fail to mention that the activities that began to take place as a result of the establishment of the social cooperative in Prostki led to a series of other ideas or even initiatives that will help promote the commune in other ways. This forced us to carry out certain activities to promote the commune, which gave us a new way of looking at certain issues because we had staked out a path for the future. Now I see things very optimistically and count on the help of some of the people who were involved in this project”*. For the time being, the commune head sees changes in the promotion of Prostki and the way of its functioning, but the process that began with the creation of two autonomous centres of activity in the community will probably exceed well beyond these two spheres.

To summarise the process of the social embedding of the “Old School”, we must emphasise that the attitudes of the residents toward the new type of entrepreneurship changed significantly. At the beginning, no one understood the new initiative despite the fact that so many institutions from the Local Partnership in Ełk (and not only from the partnership) were involved in its creation. The social attitudes were negative or even hostile. Thanks to the community development worker, the consultant and the president of the Association “Our Prostki” as well as the cooperative members, the environment in which the “Old School” functioned became more welcoming. Now, people come to the cooperative and are interested; they want to use the services it offers and see with their own eyes what is taking place there.

4. Social Effectiveness: Spheres That Were Visibly Influenced

The social goals of the “Old School” cooperative are closely linked to its financial goals. If the “Old School” can sustain itself financially

it will be possible to maintain employment positions which will in turn foster the professional and social integration of the cooperative members, and the activation of the entire Prostki community in the longer term. Thus, we can evaluate the social influence of the social cooperative in Prostki in terms of both the broader community (which we discussed with reference to the social embedding process of the “Old School”), but also in terms of the cooperative members and employees.

The social impact of the cooperative on the employees (the cooperative members) is more direct and its effects are immediately more visible. The institutional impact of the cooperative is limited by the fact that it is new and that the employees are only now developing norms and patterns of behaviour, its own institutional culture; nevertheless, the “newness” of the cooperative is also its attribute in terms of creating social change. The people who became cooperative members had great problems such as a low sense of self-worth and a lack of basic social skills (some of them had been unemployed for as long as 20 years). In some cases, the cooperative members were closed off to anyone except their closest family members. For this reason, daily activity which requires self-mobilisation, entering into new relations and taking on new social roles was a great challenge for the cooperative members. The new condition of employment prompted dramatic changes in the lives of the cooperative members, which continue to take place to this day. It is worthwhile to examine the process of becoming a cooperative member more closely; it will help us understand the social impact of the “Old School”.

The process of becoming a member and employee of the social cooperative lasted a relatively long time when we consider the time between the recruitment of the unemployed people by the Poviast Labour Office and the moment when work began in the cooperative. During these several months, the cooperative members were not informed about the progress of the project (the renovation of the “Old School” building lasted longer than planned). In such a situation, it was difficult to expect the future cooperative members to remain interested and engaged in the project. The Local Partnership organised several study visits, but some of them were counter-productive, such as a trip to social enterprises in the Warmia and Mazuria Voivodeship. They saw the social cooperative that was closed down after one year because of internal conflicts and lack of cooperation. It discouraged several people from the idea of cooperative activity and ultimately they did not participate in the initiative.

Therefore, the Local Partnership was not able to maintain the potential participants’ interest and to mobilise the beneficiaries in the

period preceding the founding of the social enterprise. The most mobile of people from the group that the Labour Office trained resigned from the project and found employment elsewhere (at that time, the situation on the labour market began to improve). Thus, the people who stayed with the project were less self-sufficient and lacked an entrepreneurial bent. It was these people, however, who became the cooperative members. During interviews carried out at the beginning of July 2007, the community development worker described the attitudes of the cooperative members in the following way: *“there is no such thing as a management team or a cooperative as an institution...The only thing that exists is a cooperative as a part of the project; it is not an autonomous institution...these people do not describe themselves as ‘me, a cooperative member’, ‘this is mine, this is generally my place of work, etc. They only come to listen to what we have to say, to learn or not to learn what someone wants to teach them, and then to go home”*.

Nevertheless, through contacts with people involved in the project, the cooperative members began to participate in new social relations and meet new people, which fostered a change in their lives. Many institutions were interested in the cooperative members and they became the centre of attention, which gave them a sense of self-worth. Most importantly, however, “something” began to happen in their lives, which completely exceeded their previous experiences. One member of the Local Partnership in Etik illustrates this change: *“they would come to the Local Partnership meetings and at the beginning, they only sat in because for them it was new to spend time with people who are so smart while here he is, an unemployed person...but here [at the meetings] you have to speak, you have to say what bothers you”*.

As the cooperative members stated in their accounts, the attitudes of their friends and neighbours toward the initiative were very negative at the beginning – no one believed that it would succeed and the cooperative employees were mocked. The date for the beginning of work was delayed, which strengthened the criticisms. Thus, the period preceding the beginning of work was difficult for the cooperative workers. They also had a sense of insecurity and fears, which is visible in how they imagined their first day of work. One of our respondents felt great fear on this day, which was associated with strong emotions, tension and stress: *“I was terribly scared; I imagined that we wouldn’t even have any coffee and that we wouldn’t have any place to sit or that we would sit and then do nothing”*. The fear about a lack of coffee or a place to sit reveals a profound insecurity of the respondent about the situation that

she was to enter: will she be able to find her way? What will she do? The statement that “we would sit and then do nothing” reveals the lack of meaning that “being at work” has for her.

The cooperative members also feared everything related to the maintenance of the location of their enterprise, such as the costs of heating and electricity. For people who felt that the very fact of going to work was a challenge, the idea of maintaining and managing such a large building exceeded their capacity in their view – it was so abstract for them that it did not enable normal functioning.

Support from their families was a very important factor in helping the cooperative members adapt to the new situation. One respondent underlined that the fears of her children and husband increased her own anxiety. In contrast, another respondent did not resign from participating in the enterprise thanks to the support of her family.

From the respondents’ statements, however, it appears that despite very difficult beginnings, stress, fears and insecurity, and asking themselves “Will I make it?”, “Will all of this work?”, working in the cooperative intensified the changes that began earlier during the recruitment period and the introductory training. However ambivalent the beginning for our respondents (on the one hand, being the centre of attention, expanding social relations, and on the other hand, insecurity, sceptical comments from neighbours and friends), the changes taking place after the work began were deep and more directed.

The process of changes in the participants of the study is revealed on a linguistic level. The first day of work, which had been a cause of fear in one of the cooperative members, turned out to be very positive: “*it’s all so fun*”. Another respondent, who was less afraid, but wanted to just make it through, said that the day for her was just “*nice*”. Generally speaking, the opening day celebration of the enterprise was viewed as ceremonial and the cooperative members remembered in particular the public reading of the mission statement. The work itself began to bring real joy: “*this thing happened that is difficult for us, we just sit here and have fun and are happy to see good things come out of it; it’s the joy that everyone gets out of having a kid inside...*”.

Becoming employed changed the life of the cooperative members as well as their attitudes, how they acted their social roles, and how their functioned in their families. One of our respondents admitted that thanks to the work, she realised how long she had been closed off to the world outside of the house: “*it sort of overwhelmed me the sitting in the house, I think I over-did it, for myself, for my kids and I didn’t feel happy or*

satisfied anymore”. This cooperative member recognises a change in her general attitude toward life by juxtaposing her situation before beginning work in the cooperative with her situation after joining the cooperative: “*before, I would open my eyes in the morning and think ‘and again the same thing’ because I sat in the house for nearly 20 years. Now when I wake in the morning, I say to myself, ‘it’s an important day, even more important than yesterday’ and it’s like that every day. Really, this is what I needed, I mean what all of us needed*”. For another respondent, taking up a job was an internal challenge to persevere with the goal but also a challenge to advance: “*I have a worse situation because I commute, so I have to get up at 5 AM to take the bus at 6:55. It’s 15 km. It’s a sort of sacrifice on my part because I just decided to do it and now I want to do what I planned*”.

Some of the cooperative members describe the changes taking place inside them as an internal war: “*I had to fight with myself because I felt very good...I had everything in order*”. The respondents also see the victories in this war: “*The first, very important step has been taken. The barrier of powerlessness is overcome, I have some sense of self-confidence and as I say, I open my eyes and say, the day is very important and we already have it all of us. Life is slowly becoming cohesive, the pieces are slowly being put in order*”.

The cooperative management observes, however, that the “emotional swings” of the employees continue, which is confirmed by the consultant and the president of the Association. It is also visible in the chaotic statements of our respondents. Stories of success are full of statements suggesting that the cooperative members continue to make an effort to convince themselves that the work they are doing is worthwhile, that the initiative *must succeed*.

Currently, only tailoring work is carried out in the cooperative, though the ultimate scale of production and available services is to expand. The people who were recommended to work in the cooperative and who had skills in pottery-making (useful in souvenir production for example) or who were interested in working in the rehabilitation workshop are currently involved in the tailoring workshop. Most people did not have previous experience with tailoring, but were able to break through: “*I also didn’t know that I would be able to do that, I swear*”. As a result, the cooperative members discover their potential: “*I completely did not know that I have such skills, I completely didn’t know. I don’t know what potential I have inside of me*”. This last sentence is particularly significant because it shows that the changes taking place as a result of

the work surprise the cooperative members themselves and allow them to rediscover themselves, their talents and consequently to build a new self-identity. A training workshop in patch-working skills carried out by an instructor also played an important role in this process of exposing the cooperative members' potential; the process of freeing their creativity began in this way. As the community development worker stated: "*for these women, it was a revolution*".

One of our respondents who was not able to overcome her fear and "sit down to work at the sewing machine" eventually found her place among the cooperative members. As the president of the "Old School" stated: "*if she can't sew, she sits and cuts out the cloth*".

In such a way, the process of becoming a cooperative member turned out to be long and full of challenges. It required endurance, the desire to exceed one's skills, to prove to oneself that change is possible as long as one endures in one's plans. The cooperative members who remained in the project were people who, to use the words of one of our respondents, "were stubborn". But it also required courage to go "into the unknown", to take a risk: "*honestly, courage is one thing, but it's a sort of craziness on our part*". It seems that the decision to be a part of the cooperative was itself a breakthrough in the way of thinking of the cooperative members. It meant that the person became involved in an initiative that was not fully understood and that had an unclear future. Our respondents, however, recognise the changes that took place as a result of working in the cooperative. Their motivation to work is no longer limited to the idea of improving their material status, but it also includes non-financial values such as feeling mutual support, a higher self-confidence, consciousness about their impact on the work of the cooperative, a general improvement in their quality of life, and happiness, all of which result from the fact of being employed.

It would seem that the impact of the cooperative on its employees is great. It initiated changes in the perception of identity among the cooperative members, their vision of the world, and it expands their worldview. All of these processes lead to a genuine social reintegration of our respondents and thus accomplishes one of the cooperative's social goals.

* * *

The process of social change, which began through to the social cooperative that was founded in Prostki, can be witnessed on two levels:

on the level of the cooperative employees and on the local community level. Without under-appreciating the positive influence of the “Old School” on its employees, it should be underlined that the process of embedding the enterprise in the community is particularly valuable. Only a social enterprise that is embedded in the local social network can capitalise on the local capacity, which in turn gives the enterprise a greater chance of success. It seems that in the case of the “Old School”, this process of embedding is taking place in reality. The cooperative offers its services to the residents of Prostki, including a neutral place for meetings. In the future, it will also offer the possibility to return to the community’s roots and traditions through the memorial hall. In this sense, the “Old School” capitalises on the local cultural resources.

However, the cooperative also plans to offer services for tourists (including rooms for rent). If this plan succeeds, the cooperative will also capitalise on local tourism. The cooperative approaches its work with an attitude of partnership and attempts to work with local providers of goods and services as well as sub-contracting to local institutions, which inevitably fosters local economic exchange. The “Old School” and the Association are also institutions that were created independently of the local public administration, which contributed to the formation of a new social network in the community that can develop into new forms of cooperation between public and civil society institutions in the future. The social network can in turn create opportunities for greater citizen engagement in public life because only strong and active local civil societies can successfully protect residents from poverty and social exclusion. Thus, we can look at the future of the “Old School” and the entire community of Prostki in a positive light.

Part II
Social Economy in Poland: Reflections

Tomasz Kaźmierczak

Community in Action – Reflections and Hypotheses¹

If the question of the involvement of local community members in issues that are important to them is a worthwhile research topic, then this is above all because the quality of life is better in places where that kind of involvement is greater and worse in places where there is less of it. The label “better/worse” has an ethical dimension because participation is an expression of democratic values and pragmatism: participation allows one to achieve a higher standard of living because it is a more efficient way of organising collective action. The question is thus important especially for social policy that is directed toward underdeveloped regions that simultaneously respect the autonomy of the communities living in such regions.

The community becomes an autonomous entity when it gains the capacity to articulate its own interests/needs outside the structures of the state and to fulfill them or to take appropriate action to fulfill them. This is possible if the community has its own organisations, meaning that it

¹ The article is an English version of the paper published in Polish as: T. Kaźmierczak, *Spoleczność lokalna w działaniu – refleksje i hipotezy*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, K. Hernik (eds.), *Spoleczność lokalna w działaniu. Kapitał społeczny. Potencjał społeczny. Lokalne governance*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008, pp. 171–185. Text summarizes seven case studies prepared by Dobroniega Trawkowska and Emilia Trawkowska, Kamila Hernik and Jacek Kisiel, Agnieszka Włodarczyk, Katarzyna Lipka-Szostak, Agnieszka Hryniewicka, Joanna Leszczyńska and Agata Dobrowolska, Ewa Bogacz-Wojtanowska. All those case studies were published in T. Kaźmierczak, K. Hernik (eds.), *op. cit.* The English versions of case study written by Kamila Hernik and Jacek Kisiel as well as the one by Joanna Leszczyńska and Agata Dobrowolska are published in this volume (Editors’ note).

is able to self-organise. In essence, this slightly different description of local civil society presents it as a dynamic process rather than a structural phenomenon². The perspective that we adopt in the following discussion is that local civil society is created for action and develops and strengthens through action.

Below, we present the reflections and hypotheses that will be discussed in this article. They are related to the following issues:

- The role of community capacity, and particularly social capital, in the process of civil society crystallising;³
- A (dominating) model for local governance culture and its source;
- The conditions in which a culture of local governance and partnership can evolve;
- The conditions in which partnerships can develop above the administrative *gmina*, local level (on an institutional level);
- The conditions in which the capacity of social enterprise is freed to promote local development.

* * *

Among the rural communities that we studied, a developing local civil society can be described in the cases of Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub. Łykoszyn and Dokudów are communities in which attempts to develop autonomy have not yet been successful.

In all these communities, the mobilising impulse for the residents was an opportunity (though rare) for the improvement of or a challenge (most often) to their economic interests or the public good. Most often, the mobilising impulse was the threat of a school closing, which in rural areas is not only a place of learning for children but it also has a more general social significance. It is not surprising that the concept of common economic interests or a public good appears in all of the villages that

² J. Kurczewska, for example, posits that local civil societies are “complex structures of free cooperation between individual actors and community institutions which are based on a specific material and social space and exist at a given moment”. See: J. Kurczewska, *Lokalne społeczeństwo obywatelskie (dwie możliwości interpretacyjne)*, in: B. Jałowiecki, W. Łukowski (eds.), *Spoleczności lokalne, teraźniejszość i przyszłość*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Wydawnictwo WSPS Academica, Warsaw 2006, p. 12.

³ Community capacity, in a general sense, is what makes communities “work”. “[It is] the interaction of human capital, organizational resources and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community” (R.J. Chaskin, P. Brown, S. Venkatesh, A. Vidal, *Building Community Capacity*, Aldin de Gruyter, New York, 2001, p. 7).

we studied. The local communities are characterised by a long tradition and the same families have inhabited them for generations. The effects of the mobilisation of residents were varied: for example, in the villages of Rodaki and Handzlówka the activities that the residents engaged in became a dynamic force for local development, while in Dokudów and Łykoszyn the activities dissolved. It seems that the differences in the events described in the case studies can be explained by the different levels of local Community capacity.

Among the three constitutive factors of local capacity – human capital, institutional infrastructure, and social capital – the level of social capital in particular was higher in Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub than in Dokudów and Łykoszyn. These differences become evident when we compare these two groups of communities with regard to three other aspects: a) trust, b) social networks, and c) citizenship engagement. All of these aspects influence social capital in the understanding of Robert Putnam⁴.

• **Trust.** The residents of Rodak, Handzlówka and Kadłub are more certain that they will not be disappointed or cheated than the residents of Dokudów and Łykoszyn. These tendencies are evident not only in the notes and observations of our researchers but above all in the factual information that they collected. When participants of the economic development project (cultivating pumpkins) in the village of Dokudów did not conform to the rules, the project failed. The case was similar in Łykoszyn, where clients – members of the local community did not pay back the informal loans that they took in order to borrow farming equipment from a local association. This behaviour undoubtedly lowered the profitability of the initiative. Here is another example from the village of Łykoszyn: one or several people added rotten beans to the beans produced by other residents, which were to be sold on foreign markets by a local association. The effect was that the buyer broke the contract, which would have lasted several years and could have brought significant economic benefits to the community.

• **Social Networks.** The level of bridging (horizontal and vertical) social capital is key to the effective and efficient functioning of the community. Bridging social capital is created by what Mark Granovetter

⁴ According to Putnam, social capital “refers to such characteristics of social organisation as: networks, norms, trust, which facilitate cooperation and coordination of activities for mutual benefit. It embodies norms and citizens’ networks of engagement” (R. Putnam, *Demokracja w działaniu. Tradycje obywatelskie we współczesnych Włoszech*, Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, Cracow 1995). See also: R. Putnam, *The Prosperous Community. Social Capital and Public Life*, “The American Prospect” 1993, No. 13.

called weak ties⁵. Granovetter's thesis is that: "the more local bridges (per person?) in a community and the greater their degree, the more cohesive the community and the more capable of acting in concert"⁶. On the other hand, Alison Gilchrist claims that communities where there is a high concentration of weak ties is well-connected, which allows the community to be both dynamic and, let us say, direct-able⁷. It seems that in terms of both horizontal and vertical connections, Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub are clearly more cohesive and better connected communities than Dokudów and Łykoszyn.

The case of Rodaki is particularly interesting with regard to its horizontal bridging social capital. In this community there are several families (primarg groups) in which there are strong ties (Granovetter calls them *cliques*). They have played a key role in the social life of the community for decades. These cliques are not closed however; bridging networks exist between them, which allow ideas/initiatives developed in one clique to reach others. Because members of these families "control" various institutions or aspects of public life that are important for the community, their participation in bridging networks guarantees cooperation between these institutions and streamlines activities. Rodaki is a cohesive and well-connected community because this kind of network integrates the social structures. Referring to the classical distinction made by Ferdinand Tönnies, we can say that it links "community" structures with "associational" ones⁸.

It seems that horizontal bridging networks in the villages of Łykoszyn and Dokudów are weaker than in Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub. We can assume that when there is a lack of bridges, ideas/initiatives born within a *clique* (even if they take the form of *pro publico bono* activities that are objectively good and beneficial for the entire community), will not have a chance to strengthen and develop because representatives of other *cliques* were not able to be involved. Although we cannot point to clear proof of failure in Dokudów, and even more so in Łykoszyn, weak bridging networks may be the cause of failure.

Bridges within a given community are important, but links with outside entities, in the immediate and further environment, are equally

⁵ See: M.S. Granovetter, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, "American Journal of Sociology" 1973, No. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1376.

⁷ See: A. Gilchrist, *The Well-Connected Community*, The Policy Press, Bristol 2004.

⁸ See: F. Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Leipzig, 1887; Polish edition: *Wspólnota i stowarzyszenie*, PWN, Warsaw, 1988.

if not more important. It is this kind of link that is decisive in whether a community is open or closed to the world. The villages of Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub maintain many external contacts, but the villages of Dokudów and Łykoszyn seem to be isolated communities.

The differences between these two groups of villages are also very clear when we take into consideration vertical bridging capital. It is precisely this kind of social capital that played a key role in the early phases of the economic initiatives implemented in Handzlówka: the Dean of the University of Technology in the town of Rzeszów first expressed his moral support for the projects and then introduced the “Zagroda Handzlowianka” (“Handzlówka Market”) on the prestigious markets of Rzeszów and Podkarpacie. This was also the case in Kadłub: the cooperatives received inspiration and support (also material support) from the German Union of Farmers Forced to Migrate (*Związek Rolników Wypędzonych*). In Rodaki, this kind of capital developed later, but it became very strong and now serves as a key resource to maintain residents’ participation. In Łykoszyn, the economic initiative was inspired by a local lawyer, who financially supported it throughout his life until his death. Nevertheless, the vertical bridges in Łykoszyn were decidedly weaker, and in Dokudów they were nearly non-existent. It is thus difficult to consider these last two communities as cohesive and well-connected.

• **Citizen Engagement.** The existence of various forms of volunteerism – cultural, athletic, social, educational, etc. – is a measure of citizen engagement in the community. When we compare both groups of communities according to this scale, it can be observed that the level of involvement in Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub is higher than in Łykoszyn and Dokudów. It should not be surprising then that the activity of residents in these communities is a continuation of a long and strong tradition of self-organisation and a rich public life that engages people in public affairs. Moreover, this tradition is a part of the contemporary consciousness and a point of pride for the residents. It also influences their sense of identity. Conversely, collective action organised in the past by the residents of Łykoszyn and Dokudów was not successful.

In addition to social capital, a community’s capacity is influenced by the: a) institutional infrastructure and b) human capital.

• **Institutional Infrastructure.** Although all of the communities that we studied have the same status in the national public administration – they are all *sołectwo* (a village belonging to the broader territory of the local self-government, the *gmina* (translator’s note)) – there are differences in the institutional infrastructure of these villages. The villages

can be divided into the same two groups: relatively speaking, more organisations/institutions have their offices in Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub than in Łykoszyn and Dokudów.

• **Human Capital.** Consistent data about the level of human capital in the described communities was not collected. It is worth noting two issues, however. First, in the villages of Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub more people were actively engaged in community issues. Thus, the human capital in these communities exists on an especially high level, above the minimum threshold: residents are motivated to be involved in local issues and have the knowledge and skills to make their engagement productive. Second, the people who carry the weight of running key activities consistently participate in training programmes that raise their qualifications and thus increase the effectiveness of the organisations in which they work/are active. While in Łykoszyn and Dokudów typically one leader holds the weight of organising activities, in Rodaki, Handzlówka and Kadłub leadership is a collective endeavour.

The conclusion that we can draw from the above analysis is the following: a local civil society cannot develop in every community. It is possible only when community capacity is sufficiently high. Clearly, it is impossible to precisely define what a sufficient level of community capacity is. It seems though that the level of social capital ultimately decides about the development of a local civil society; thus, the quality and quantity of social networks is of fundamental consequence.

* * *

A local civil society functions in the sphere of public affairs – members of the community organise in order to better fulfill their needs, resolve problems, and develop the community. The same can be said for local public authorities. Article 7 of the Act on local self-governments states that the responsibility of the *gmina* (local level of the public administration – translator's note) is to satisfy the collective needs of the community. Other regulations charge the *gmina* with the responsibility of developing and implementing documents that outline local development strategies and problem resolution strategies. It can be considered that a most natural partnership would develop between local public authorities and local civil society organisations. In reality, however, the relations between these two types of institutions in the rural communities that we studied reveal a certain level of tension. Its level varies: in Handzlówka, for example, it is weak; in other communities

these relations are hostile, such as in Łykoszyn where the decision of the governor to sell a school was devastating to the residents who built it as a centre for nascent civil society initiatives. This state of relations is not new, and such situations have been described in the past⁹. It is interesting, however, that these tensions arise in places where, for Polish standards, the relations between public authorities and non-governmental organisations are exemplary¹⁰.

There are of course simple interpretations of this state of affairs: personal conflicts, conflict of ambitions, and conflicts over maintaining or gaining power. The weakness of these interpretations, however, is that they ascribe unclean motives and intentions to actors on both sides. In essence, there is no well-founded reason to assume the existence of such motives/intentions in the studied communities. It is more appropriate to assume that citizens and representatives of local public authorities' actions are *pro publico bono*, but if this is the case then where does the tension come from? Sometimes, the relations between public authorities and non-governmental organisations are explained by drawing attention to the paternalistic attitudes of the public authorities¹¹. Without negating the existence of such attitudes, it is important to note that they do not explain the problem. We must consider the underlying roots of such attitudes: Where do they come from? How are they legitimised? It would seem that the reason for tensions between local public authorities and non-governmental organisations lie deeper and have a broader context. They arise from the incompatibility between the logic of the Polish model of local self-governments (*gminas*) and the logic of local civil society activities¹².

⁹ “The relations between the sectors were varied in the last decade [1990s]: from exemplary cases of socially positive cooperation, to friendly tolerance of unequal partners, and a lack of cooperation or even mutual dislike of any contact” (M. Rymśa, A. Hryniewicka, P. Derwich, *Jak wprowadzić w życie zasadę pomocniczości państwa: doświadczenia lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, in: M. Rymśa (ed.), *Współpraca sektora obywatelskiego z administracją publiczną*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2004, p. 31).

¹⁰ This concerns the *gmina* Klucze, on the border of which lies the village of Rodaki. Klucze has all of the necessary strategic documents, including the strategy for cooperating with institutions carrying out public good activities as well as the rare programme for social policies benefiting the disabled, which *gminas* prepare in collaboration with NGOs.

¹¹ See: P. Frączak, *Między współpracą a konfliktem: dylematy relacji między organizacjami pozarządowymi a władzami lokalnym*, in: M. Rymśa (ed.), *Współpraca sektora obywatelskiego...*, *op. cit.*

¹² This hypothesis would also explain why the institutional framework that was created by the Act on **Public Benefit Activity and Volunteer Work** is only a facade,

A *gmina* is a legally defined self-government community of political significance (according to Article 1 of the Act on local self-governments) that is responsible for all public affairs that influence the local community. This is a fundamental principle and exceptions are also regulated by the law (Article 6 of the Act on local self-governments). The *gmina* collaborates with non-governmental organisations that have the status of a public benefit organisation as defined by relevant Acts. This collaboration can be based, on the one hand, on the transfer of public responsibilities to non-public institutions and, on the other hand, on the mutual exchange of information about planned activities and the direction of cooperation with the goal of harmonising activity; on consulting regulations governing the activity of non-governmental organisations with these organisations; and on creating collaborative advisory groups and initiatives that include representatives from non-governmental organisations and other institutions as well as from the relevant organs of the public administration (Article 5 of the Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteer Work). Thus, as can be understood from the above-mentioned laws, the responsibility for the entirety of local public affairs rests on the local *gmina* authorities and nothing or no one can relieve them of these responsibilities. The *gmina* can and should, however, benefit from the capacity of non-governmental organisations, including their “productive power” as well as the knowledge and skills of experts. In both situations, non-governmental organisations serve as instruments that the *gmina* can use to fulfill its responsibility.

A local civil society and its “institutions” are created as an expression of citizens’ freedom. The nature of their relations with public authorities is significantly influenced by the following: if they use this freedom to address issues related to public affairs, then non-governmental organisations function in the domain that is already legally ascribed to the *gmina* authorities. Since the *gmina*’s responsibility is, so to speak, total, there is no place for grass-root civil society initiatives in which they would not have to compete with the *gmina*, and the *gmina* with them¹³.

which hides an old style of behaviours rather than provides a foundation for good collaboration between sectors. See: M. Rymśa, G. Makowski, M. Dudkiewicz (eds.), *Państwo a trzeci sektor. Prawo i instytucje w działaniu*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2007; W. Mandryś, *Relacje pomiędzy badanymi organizacjami a władzą publiczną na poziomie lokalnym, regionalnym, krajowym*, in: K. Wódcz (ed.), *Negocjowana demokracja, czyli europejskie governance po polsku*, Scholar, Warsaw 2007.

¹³ This observation confirms the fact that regional and *gmina* level public authorities often consider non-governmental organisations as a necessary evil because “in accordance

A local civil society is directed by the logic of freedom while local public authorities by the logic of responsibility; these areas are not incompatible, but they do generate conflict. What is more, the stronger the autonomy of the community is, i.e. the stronger the local civil society is thus the greater the chance of conflict because it will be more difficult for the *gmina* to capitalise on the structures of civil society for its own ends. It seems that the tension in the studied communities is rooted in the lack of cohesion between these two logics.

This problem, which we barely touch upon in this article, is not unique to Poland. In essence, it reveals fundamental dilemmas in state-society relations that are characteristic of continental Europe where the society/nation is transposed onto the state¹⁴. Conversely, the Anglo-American model differentiates between a domain belonging to society and citizens and one belonging to the state. Lester Salamon's voluntary failure theory is a typical expression of the latter model¹⁵. He considers the government as a secondary institution, which reacts to the inefficiency of non-profit organisations. Most theories claim the opposite: non-profit organisations are secondary and develop in order to reduce the effects of the state's inefficiency¹⁶.

with the Act on Public Benefit Organisations, self-governments are obliged to create a programme for cooperation with NGOs. On the other hand, NGOs are treated as competition by local governments in the fulfillment of certain tasks, securing funding as well as in the domain of their expertise" (W. Mandrysz, *Relacje pomiędzy badanymi organizacjami...*, *op. cit.*, p. 216).

¹⁴ This paradigm emerges from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. It claims that "the state was the highest and supreme interpreter of the people's will and no other established body could exist because citizens had to strengthen the authority of the state in order to widen and protect their individual rights. The liberal form of the state, which the French Revolution affirmed, implied the isolation of individuals. Accordingly, the legitimacy of intermediate bodies was to be denied, the only freedom thus being that referring to single individuals and not to social groups such as corporations, foundation and associations" (C. Borzaga, A. Santuari, *Przedsiębiorstwa społeczne we Włoszech*, Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, Warsaw 2005, p. 6).

¹⁵ See: L. Salamon, *Partners In Public Services*, in: W. Powell (ed.), *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press.

¹⁶ See: D Burlingame, *Dlaczego organizacje non-profit? Amerykański punkt widzenia, Sektor pozarządowy w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie*, in: B. Synak, M. Ruzica (eds.), *Sektor pozarządowy w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie*, IFiS UG, Gdańsk-Indianapolis 1996. Conversely, the historian J. Harris describes the goals of the government during the Victorian period in England as follows: "defining a framework of laws and regulations that allow society to function largely independently...the corporational aspect of social life was to take on the form of free associations and focus on local communities, not state institutions" (J. Harris as cited in J. Lewis, *Relacje państwo – sektor ochotniczy w Wielkiej Brytanii*, "Trzeci Sektor" 2006, No. 8).

Between these two paradigms we find the principle of subsidiarity, which is written into the preamble of the Polish constitution. It is mentioned alongside the principles of the sovereignty of each side in a partnership, efficiency, fair competition, and transparency governing cooperation between public administration institutions and non-governmental organisations in the domain of public responsibility (Article 5 paragraph 2 of the Act on **Public Benefit Activity and Volunteer Work**)¹⁷. It is worth noting that even if this principle functioned in practice, including in the *gminas* that we studied, it would still not remove the source of the tension because the principle of subsidiarity is not compatible with the logic of local government responsibility. It requires space between non-public institutions and the state. The logic of responsibility governing public institutions, which views the community as a political entity, does not create such a space.

The tension in the relations between public authorities and local civil society organisations has another source: the space in which local civil society is active is not congruent with the space occupied by the *gmina*, which has arbitrary boundaries. The communities described in this work are legally defined as *solectwo*. Each rural *gmina* contains several *solectwo* that develop at “different rates”, which means that a *solectwo* with a civil society with strong institutional structures can neighbour with a passive and apathetic *solectwo*. Active communities have different expectations and needs from the public authorities than passive communities do. This clearly places public authorities in a difficult position because in order to fulfill their responsibility they must/should treat all *solectwo* equally, which requires the equal distribution of resources. Clearly, these conditions cause tensions and conflict because the expectations/demands/conclusions directed toward the *gmina* resulting from the needs and interests defined by the local civil society can be irreconcilable with the principle of equality. If public authorities do not comply with this principle, then they must at least be accountable to it¹⁸. If such a conflict arises, it is highly likely that it will be publicly exposed because the local civil society has the capacity to articulate and publicise it.

Thus, the answer to the question of developing a local governance culture (model relations and the role of local partnership between local

¹⁷ See: M. Rymśa, A. Hryniewicka, P. Derwich, *Zasada pomocniczości państwa w Ustawie o działalności pożytku publicznego i wolontariacie*, in: M. Rymśa (ed.), *Współpraca sektora obywatelskiego...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ This explains in part the tensions in Rodaki, which is decidedly more prominent compared to other *solectwo* in the *gmina* Klucze.

civil society and public authorities in fulfilling the complex public goals) appears to be the following: the existing institutional structure does not force the different actors to cooperate, but allows conflicts/tensions to arise. Each side takes an oppositional stance. Consequently, these conflicts/tensions continue or, what is worse, escalate. Managing local public affairs is fragmented, while the realisation of public goals separately produces chaos rather than synergy.

It must be emphasised, however, that the above hypothesis refers to communities with a developed local civil society that is sufficiently strong to aspire to the role of partner for public authorities. Thus, not every community in which non-governmental organisations formed and are active can be such a partner. This concerns not only communities where local civil society structures are weak, but also those in which non-governmental organisations are not a part of local civil society because they did not form through a process of self-organisation and are not grass-root based. This is particularly the case for organisations that consciously or unconsciously are instrumentalised by the public administration or are formed by the public authorities. P. Frączak distinguishes two types of such organisations:

- *quasi*-social organisations;
- para-political organisations¹⁹.

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As stated earlier, the logic that directs local civil society activity and the logic of responsibility that is appropriate to the *gmina* self-government are not cohesive and generate conflict/tension, but they are not incompatible. It is therefore relevant to ask what conditions would allow a local governance culture to develop through partnership; the management of public affairs (all or some of them) would then take place through a collaborative effort between local public authorities and local civil society structures, both within the decision-making process and the implementation of the law.

In searching for an answer to this question it is worth noting that the practice of cross-sectoral cooperation through “consultation” described by many of our researchers has improved over time. Grzegorz Makowski and Marek Rymsza underlined that the work of various advisory groups

¹⁹ See: P. Frączak, *Między współpracą a konfliktem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 48. Also see: J. Kurczewski (ed.), *Lokalne społeczności obywatelskie*, Institute of Applied Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2003.

that include representatives from both the public and the social sectors is more positively evaluated with time. First, such a consultation is positively evaluated because it supports communication between the two sides which did not exist before. Second, it creates a space for direct contact. “In places where such space was created,” write Makowski and Rymśza, “there was no return to the situation of mutual relations managed ‘at a distance’. Organisations and self-governments clearly became closer”²⁰. However, these identified changes are not sufficiently significant for us to consider them as an all-together new quality of relations between non-governmental organisations and public administration. Rather these changes point to what blocks the further development of a local governance culture that is based on partnership, as well as the development of the above-mentioned space for direct contact. Such a space can be understood as horizontal and vertical social networks (bridging social capital) that link people and institutions working on both sides²¹. These networks create channels of communication that enable negotiation about the differences of perspective, the definition of goals and priorities, and collaboration in searching for resources and ways of linking these resources. Such a network also allows both sides to appropriately adjust to the possibilities and limits of other members of the network. By transcending sectoral boundaries, networks de facto blur the boundaries and allow local actors/members of the network to collectively define their perspective and the appropriate collective action such as strategies, programmes, or projects. In such a situation, the differences in logic between public administration and non-governmental organisations disappear “without hurting anyone”, and the appropriate conditions are created for improving the efficiency public affairs management causing a synergy effect. The networks described above function as a social base for the creation of formal local partnerships, which are understood as a “tri-sectoral agreement between public institutions, non-governmental organisations and enterprises that want to act collectively for the benefit of their region [local partnership]. They have a long-term perspective and they have a common territory of activity and common goals. Such an agreement is characterised by its dynamic nature – as a local partnership

²⁰ G. Makowski, M. Rymśza, *Jaki mamy pożytek z Ustawy o działalności pożytku publicznego?*, “Analizy i Opinie” No. 82, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008, p. 3.

²¹ On the meaning of social networks, see: T. Kaźmierczak, *Praca socjalna: animacja społeczna, kapitał społeczny, networking*, in: T. Kaźmierczak (ed.), *Zmiana w społeczności lokalnej. Szkice o kapitale społecznym w praktyce społecznej i nie tylko*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2007.

progressively develops, the number of members and span of activities can change”²². As much as the existence of a network is a prerequisite for the development of a partnership, it is human capital (knowledge and skills) that decides about its efficiency and effectiveness²³.

Such a partnership did not arise in any of the communities we studied because the first social prerequisite was not fulfilled. This does not mean that the appropriate networks will not develop in the near or more distant future. The empirical data collected and presented in the following works suggests that people belonging to both sets of institutions, who understand the rules (such as current/past local leaders or current/past *gmina* employees), play a key role in building networks or bridges that allow people and public administration institutions to be included in local civil society networks. Institutions existing between the sphere of the public administration and local civil society can also function as bridges: councils of the *solectwo* and other advisory councils supporting local governments, parents’ councils in schools, and other similar institutions. The example of the *Gościniec* partnership in the village of Rodaki shows how effective such people and structures are in building networks.

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A governance culture can exist not only on the *solectwo-gmina* level but also on the levels above the *gmina*, and it is equally important on each level. Resolving social and economic problems effectively as well as achieving defined goals requires activity on all levels of public administration governing public life. In order to resolve certain problems, activities must be carried out on both a wider territorial scale and on administrative levels above the local *gmina* level.

We studied two cases of partnership agreements on the level above the *gmina*. Although the name of both cases contains the term “partnership”, only the *Gościniec* Partnership can be considered to be one as we define it here. *Dolina Strugu* was not a partnership because its members comprise only representatives of the *gminas* administration; it thus maintains a culture of *government*, not *governance*.

Because the partnerships of *Dolina Strugu* and *Gościniec* are essentially two different phenomena, it is difficult to compare them

²² R. Serafin, B. Kazior, A. Jarzębska, *Grupy partnerskie. Od idei do współdziałania. Praktyczny poradnik*, Fundacja Partnerstwo dla Środowiska, Cracow 2005.

²³ On how to develop a partnership, see: R. Tennyson, *Poradnik partnerstwa*, Fundacja Partnerstwo dla Środowiska, Cracow 2006.

more closely. They do, however, have one aspect in common: both are partnership agreements between many actors and function very effectively. It is worth noticing that in both cases the involvement of key persons in the local community is fundamental to the importance of the social network. First, the effect of its work is the formal partnership agreement. Second, the network is a sort of guarantee for the efficiency of activities that it undertakes and a cohesive vision for long-term plans.

Interestingly, in both cases, external observers noticed that both partnerships were characterised by a lack of organisational transparency, which results from the effectiveness of networks in creating implementing structures for “secondary responsibilities”. These structures are naturally temporary; their stability and permanence is above all a function of the network structure itself.

This offers additional proof that a network of connections is a necessary pre-condition for collective action – whether it be on the level of a local rural community, the administrative level of the *gmina*, or a collaborative effort between institutions.

* * *

The social enterprises that we describe more or less comply with the accepted criteria of embeddedness. The examples also seem to confirm the hypothesis that social enterprises have a pro-development function. They multiply social capital from which they were created and transform it into other forms of capital:

- financial capital – by stimulating exchanges on the market they increase the amount of money available to the community;
- human capital – they require people to increase their knowledge and gain new skills;
- institutional capital – they create a new institutional infrastructure.

The authors of the case studies carefully analysed both the level of embeddedness as well as the social and economic effectiveness of the enterprises functioning in the studied communities. It is worth focusing on two of the communities, which show that the development capacity of enterprises is not fully capitalised upon in certain circumstances.

The first example is that of the firm *Chmielnik-Zdrój* in Dolina Strugu. One of its goals was to support farmers during the difficult period of economic transformation by guaranteeing markets for their goods. This initiative was not fully successful because the method of creating the enterprise (top-down) and its legal form (a firm instead of a cooperative)

were not acceptable for the farmers. Thus, the links between the farmers and the enterprise did not develop.

The second example is that of breeding geese in Rodaki. In this case, the economic initiative, which had enormous social, ecological and economic potential (if the authors of the case studies are correct), could have “burnt out”. The problem in this case was that the rapid development of the initiative outgrew the capacity of the community. Local authorities, which could have given a new impetus to the initiative by, for example, attracting investors, did not do so because they did not treat the initiative as their own.

Although the type of economic activity is different in each case, their full social and economic success was limited because of the weak/lack of embeddedness in the local community/local civil society (in the case of the *Chmielnik-Zdrój* firm) or in the local authorities (in the case of geese breeding in Rodaki). In other words, in order for both initiatives to develop and for their potential to be freed, they require partnership and the support and investment of both sides. In such a situation, the conclusion could be the following: the social enterprise achieves full developmental capacity in the context of a culture of partnership and local governance.

* * *

The above reflections and hypotheses were concerned with the conditions that must/should be fulfilled in order for local/regional communities to 1) be active and 2) be efficiently active. The significance of this issue results from the fact that in today’s globalised world national governments are increasingly limited and, paradoxically, a larger span of issues depend on the activity of the local community.

The perspective that was adopted in this article adopted both the practical and theoretical views of social sciences. The same issues are of concern to theoreticians and practitioners of democracy, and for similar reasons. Many of them derive their ideas from the theory and practice in the field of deliberative democracy. It is worth noting that the essence of what we are calling here the culture of local governance and the essence of deliberative democracy are very closely related and can even be considered identical in many ways, although the language of the discourse is different²⁴.

²⁴ See: D. Miller, *Demokracja debatująca a teoria wyboru społecznego*, in: P. Śpiewak (ed.), *Przyszłość demokracji*, Fundacja Aletheia, Warsaw 2005.

Marek Rymśza

The Second Wave of the Social Economy in Poland and the Concept of Active Social Policy¹

1. The “Old” and “New” Social Economy in Europe

The wave of social economy that began in the 1990s in Europe is one of the main reactions on an institutional level to the crisis of the welfare state. As it was noted by Ewa Leś, the growing interest in the social economy and the third sector as a potential source of social services dates back to the emergence of the crisis in the doctrine of a welfare function for the state that occurred in the 1980s². The above-mentioned author refers to the discovery of a “new poverty”, which was associated above all with social exclusion and not a lack of income. State programmes aiming to encourage redistribution of economic resources, and even those that were part of the most expansive welfare state system during the so-called “golden age of social policy” (in the 1950s, 60s and 70s before the previously mentioned crisis), did not eliminate “non-income related poverty”. Critics of the welfare state doctrine claimed that state programmes, especially those organised by social services, actually entrenched the problem of social exclusion by putting welfare beneficiaries into a passive position³. The reaction to this problem was

¹ The text is a revised version of the paper published in Polish as: M. Rymśza, *Druga fala ekonomii społecznej a koncepcja aktywnej polityki społecznej*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza (eds.), *Kapitał Społeczny. Ekonomia społeczna*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2007, pp. 175–189 (Editors’ note).

² See: E. Leś, *Nowa ekonomia społeczna. Wybrane koncepcje*, “Trzeci Sektor” 2005, No. 2.

³ This kind of criticism of social policy in welfare states developed, among others, the theory of the *underclass*, which explains the phenomenon of generational inheritance

a return to the activation of social welfare beneficiaries, which began as the concept of workfare (“work instead of welfare”) in the late 1980s in Anglo-Saxon countries. This approach arose a decade later in welfare state systems in countries of continental Europe.

The preference for activation support programmes, and especially those focused on self-activation (social entrepreneurship), put into question one of the fundamental elements of the welfare state doctrine: the principle of decommodification, which assumed that public services aimed to make the well-being of citizens independent of their labour market activity. Simultaneously, it led to a renewed discovery of the achievements of the social economy movement at the turn of the 20th century, and the inter-war period, which worked to develop social entrepreneurship, especially in the form of cooperatives. As it turned out, in some countries in Western Europe such as Italy, France and Spain, cooperatives survived during the entire post-war period by functioning as an economic activity carried out in the open market conditions of the time⁴. In the following paper, I refer to this concept of the social economy rooted in the European tradition and founded on such institutions as cooperatives, mutual insurance associations and credit unions as the “old social economy”. I simultaneously emphasise how this “old social economy” was different from the modern social economy (“new social economy”). This latter social economy promotes, on the one hand, new legal and institutional forms such as social enterprises and, on the other hand, economic activity undertaken by non-governmental organisations (associations and foundations). Among cooperatives, it appreciates the specificity of the institutional form of social cooperatives⁵.

Ewa Leś refers to the return to the idea of the social economy, which began in Western Europe in the 1980s, as the development of a “new social economy movement”⁶. The use of the word “movement” indicates the social character of social economy initiatives. In this framework, such initiatives are understood as a grassroots reaction of citizens to the crisis of the welfare state, which preceded innovative activities carried out by public services. In the following discussion,

of poverty by social welfare beneficiaries. See: C. Murray, *Losing Ground. American Social Policy 1950–1980*, Basic Books, New York 1994.

⁴ It should be mentioned that in communist countries the idea of cooperatives was distorted and cooperatives were integrated into the centrally planned economy.

⁵ See: M. Rymysza, *Stara i nowa ekonomia społeczna. Polska na tle doświadczeń europejskich*, “Trzeci Sektor” 2005, No. 2.

⁶ See: E. Leś, *Nowa ekonomia...*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

I will focus on the “second wave” of the social economy understood in a more narrow sense. I will pass over the period the legitimisation of the crisis of the welfare state in Western Europe (in the 1980s and the first part of the 1990s), when decision-makers and expert circles attempted to defend the *status quo* on an institutional level. Consequently, initiatives aiming to introduce reforms were grassroots-based and were not entirely controlled by the ruling elites⁷. I will thus focus on the last decade (the second half of the 1990s to the present) when the collapse of the welfare state doctrine was inevitable (even social democrats retreated from defending it⁸), and European decision-makers and experts thus focused their efforts on finding a resolution and undertook reforms of the social welfare systems in different countries⁹.

Moreover, it should be underlined that among the factors that opened Europe to the second wave of the social economy was the fact that social policy was reoriented, which first of all involved the promotion of the concept of an active social policy in Europe (in Poland as well). Second, in the case of Poland, there was a gradual acceptance of the view that social policies must be reoriented to prioritise activation over protection activities, and moreover, not by simply accepting European Union priorities but by identifying the functional demands that arise during subsequent phases in the transformation process, which began in 1989. It must be made clear that the second of the above factors should not be reduced to the first. In the case of Poland’s openness to the social economy, we can observe a fusion of the two independent factors: implementing European Union priorities after our country entered the EU as well as considering our own experiences with the transformation and drawing lessons from the mistakes, insufficiencies and limits of social policy during the first several years of systemic change¹⁰.

⁷ It is worth noting that until recently, in Western European academic circles of researchers interested in the question of social policy, the predominating conviction was that neoliberal social reforms are an extreme ideology of Anglo-Saxon “Reagan-omics” and will not impact on the functioning of the “European social model”.

⁸ See: A. Giddens, *The Third Way. The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1998.

⁹ See: M. Rymśza, *Aktywna polityka społeczna w teorii i praktyce*, in: T. Kazmierczak, M. Rymśza (eds.), *W stronę aktywnej polityki społecznej*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2003.

¹⁰ See: M. Rymśza, *Reformy społeczne lat dziewięćdziesiątych: próba podsumowania*, in: M. Rymśza (ed.), *Reformy społeczne. Bilans dekady*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2004.

The new wave of the social economy in Europe is largely supported by the state: it is a policy priority of the EU¹¹ and of a great majority of the Member States¹². The active role of state social policy, which distinguishes the second wave of the social economy from the first, is illustrated in the scheme below.

The “old” and “new” social economy
<p><u>Characteristics of the traditional European model of the social economy (SE):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– SE fills niches that are “unattractive” for the commercial market;– Participation in SE initiatives is based on the principle of reciprocity (mutuality);– A key role of leaders and social activists in undertaking and promoting initiatives;– Initiatives are grassroots and sustainable;– Lack of legal benefits for SE institutions with a low level of market regulation by the state;– Typical SE institutions: cooperatives, mutual insurance associations, credit unions.
<p><u>Characteristics of the modern social economy sector in the European Union:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– SE builds clusters around the “normal market”;– The basis of participation in SE initiatives: the principle of inclusion of the socially excluded; the concept of “mixing risks” (in social enterprises, fully capable employees “lift up” disabled employees);– The important role of leaders, managers as well as support from the state in undertaking and promoting the initiatives;– Supported employment and social employment made possible with public subsidies;– Significant legal benefits for SE institutions in the context of a relatively high level of market regulation by the state;– Typical SE institutions: social enterprises, social cooperatives, non-governmental organisations that carry out economic activities.
<p>Source: author.</p>

2. Disseminating the Concept of Active Social Policy

It is with certain satisfaction that I analyse the state of disseminating the concept of an active social policy in the context of the new social economy in Poland; in recent years, we have observed that the direction

¹¹ See: S. Kelly, *Ekonomia społeczna i przedsiębiorczość społeczna w Unii Europejskiej*, in: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza (eds.), *W stronę...*, *op. cit.*

¹² See: *A strategic challenge for employment*, CIRIEC, Liege 2000.

of change in policies has confirmed the accuracy of the recommendations made by the Institute of Public Affairs through the Social Policy Programme. In 2003, among other works, we published a collection of papers entitled “Toward an Active Social Policy” (*W stronę aktywnej polityki społecznej*)¹³, in which we indicated the need to transform the priorities that were outlined in social policy from protective welfare activities into activation programmes. The last four years have brought changes precisely in this direction. The information presented in the scheme below illustrates some examples.

Disseminating elements of the concept of an active social policy

Examples of practical activities initiated in the third sector:

- Activation of the local community through the CAL method (CAL – Polish acronyms taken from *Centrum Aktywności Lokalnej* – Centre for Local Activation; method developed by the Association for CAL – *Stowarzyszenie na rzecz CAL*);
- Activation of the local community: funds and programmes run locally (Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland – *Akademia Rozwoju Filantropii w Polsce*, Rural Development Foundation – *Fundacja Wspomagania Wsi* and other organisations);
- Social reintegration of socially marginalised people through the Koefed School method (Foundation “Barka”);
- Offices for Activation of the Unemployed (*Biura Aktywności Bezrobotnych*), which benefit from the French concept of “assisting the unemployed” (Caritas Poland).

Legislative measures:

- Act on Public Benefits Activities and Volunteer Work (*Ustawa o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie*) (2003);
- Act on Social Employment (*Ustawa o zatrudnieniu socjalnym*) (2003);
- Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions (*Ustawa o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy*) (2004);
- Act on Social Welfare (*Ustawa o pomocy społecznej*) (2004);
- Act on Social Cooperatives (*Ustawa o spółdzielniach socjalnych*) (2006).

Cross-Sectoral Activities:

- Projects organised through the European Union’s EQUAL Initiative.

Source: author.

¹³ See: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza (eds.), *W stronę aktywnej polityki społecznej*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2003.

The term “active social policy” has already entered public discourse in Poland¹⁴ as well as in the language used in government documents and documents prepared as part of projects organised through the EU European Social Fund in our country. However, only selected elements of this model are becoming popular without its theoretical foundation¹⁵, which has several consequences. One of the consequences is a reduction of the concept of active social policy (ASP) in Polish public discourse to the Anglo-Saxon phrasing of *workfare*, which reflects the American philosophy of free market economy¹⁶. ASP is thus supported from this ideological position or criticised from other ideological positions¹⁷. In my opinion, the concept of ASP has a “European dimension” and differs from the concept of *workfare* on an ethical level because, unlike Anglo-Saxon criticism of the welfare state, it makes reference to the achievements of the Durkheimian School, which was among the major influences of the continental model of social policy (founded on social solidarity rather than individualism)¹⁸.

In the above-mentioned 2003 publication of the Institute of Public Affairs, I presented the concept of active social policy as a model solution based on five basic assumptions: (1) a preference for the principle of social participation at the expense of the principle of maximising social protection, (2) promotion of various forms of supported employment, (3) focusing support on the unemployed who are capable of working (or who are able to regain this capacity), (4) a change through social policy programmes not in the scale of redistribution, but the kind of goods that are distributed (access to work instead of welfare benefits), (5) a tendency to legitimise social programmes in a way that transcends traditional ideological divisions¹⁹. The priorities of ASP are also presented in the scheme below.

¹⁴ It should be remembered that other terms such as “activating social policy” and “work state” are also used.

¹⁵ A deeper analysis from a sociological perspective of the ASP concept: R. Berkel, I.H. Möller (eds.), *Active social policies in the EU. Inclusion through participation?*, The Policy Press, Bristol 2002.

¹⁶ Even in the United States this approach is termed conservative.

¹⁷ See, for example, the critical analysis of the ASP concept in: R. Szarffenberg, *Dialog wokół polityki społecznej*, “Dialog” 2006, No. 4.

¹⁸ See: R. Berkel, I.H. Möller (eds.), *Active social policies...*, *op. cit.* The issue of the achievements of the Durkheimian School requires further analysis, which exceeds the possibilities of this discussion.

¹⁹ See: M. Rymysza, *Aktywna polityka społeczna...*, *op. cit.*

Basic assumptions of the concept of active social policy

- ASP is a collection of programmes aiming to activate beneficiaries even at the expense of limiting the level of welfare support that they receive. There is thus a change in social policy on an ethical level: from social protection to participation.
- The goal of ASP is “social inclusion”, but participation in society is perceived through the lens of activation on the labour market, if not in the “normal” labour market than at least in the social economy sector, which “builds around” the commercial market.
- Activating initiatives organised through ASP are addressed above all to the unemployed who are capable of working, and in the second place to people who can regain the capacity to work. This support is organised at the expense of social welfare for people who are continually unable to be economically active.
- In the European Union, programmes that are a part of active labour market policies “replace” traditional welfare programmes; however, this does not translate into limiting the redistribution function of social policy. The kind of goods that are redistributed changes: work is redistributed instead of welfare benefits. This is not synonymous to the *workfare* idea of “work instead of welfare”.
- The ASP model transcends traditional ideological divisions and it is implemented to the largest degree by the country of Denmark, which certainly not by accident lies on the frontier of three traditional social policy models: the social democratic model (Scandinavian countries), the conservative model (the neighboring country of Germany), and the liberal model (in Denmark’s neighboring country from “across the sea”, the United Kingdom).

Source: M. Rymcza, *Aktywna polityka społeczna...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–32.

I consider the concept of ASP as having great potential to develop and create the opportunity to reconstruct the European social security system. Moreover, ASP achieves this not by simply “cutting benefits”, which lowers the standards of social security and emerges from the assumption that nothing is more effective in activating the unemployed than the pressure of one’s own poverty as stated by George Gilder, a representative of the neoliberal school²⁰. On the contrary, ASP strengthens social ties and, in accordance with the principle of empowerment²¹, capitalises

²⁰ See: G. Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty*, Zysk i S-ka, Poznan 2001, p. 199.

²¹ The principle of *empowerment* is currently over-used and over-simplified in debates on the methods of reducing social exclusion. We usually understand the term *empowerment* as the participation of beneficiaries in support programs and training (investing in human capital). In the classical approach to *empowerment*, a key element of concept is social capital. Non-governmental organisations empower people serving as

on civil society's capacity to organise mutual support (social capital resources). Precisely this inclination links the concept of ASP with the social economy (both the "old" and the "new") and creates the opportunity to treat the reconstruction of the welfare state in terms of development rather than social regress.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to objectively consider not only the strengths but also the weaknesses of the concept of active social policies, as well as to acknowledge the existing criticisms, doubts and questions²².

3. The Strengths of the Concept of Active Social Policy

In my opinion, the strengths of the concept of active social policy in the form that it currently takes in Europe are: (1) transcending traditional ideological divisions between supporters and opponents of the welfare state, (2) rejection of the model of a total welfare institution, (3) capitalising on the social and economic potential of the third sector, and (4) rejection of the unmotivating principle of decommodification.

Transcending traditional ideological divisions over the idea of the *welfare state*

The growing popularity of the concept of ASP is linked to the fact that it transcends traditional ideological divisions. Its basic assumptions, after a certain "reworking" (that does not alter the essence of the idea) can be accepted in by all three traditional models of social policy: liberal (as the European version of *workfare*), social democrat (as a concept that focuses on the social inclusion of marginalised groups), and conservative (as a new form of social solidarity in social policy). The concept of ASP is not identical to the concept of *workfare*, which has a clear ideological profile, although it benefits from practical solutions developed through the liberal model²³.

mediating structures between local communities and public institutions .See: P. Berger, R. Neuhaus, *To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington D.C. 1977.

²² I analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the concept of ASP in several papers, lectures and speeches given in Polish during the last years. Other authors may have different opinions about this matter.

²³ See: M. Rymśa, *Aktywizacja przez pracę: rola społecznej przedsiębiorczości*, in: *Przeciw wykluczeniu społecznemu* (volume with conference papers), Foundation "Pro Caritate", Warsaw 2003.

Rejection of the model of a total welfare institution

Organisers of the contemporary trend of activation through work programmes are conscious of the threats and side-effects of the 19th-century model of *working houses*²⁴. As a result, they reject a total welfare institution and accept that “work community” in most cases must be separate from “housing community”. This approach distinguishes the “centres for social integration” and “clubs for social integration”, which are currently being created in Poland, from the Victorian-era *working houses*²⁵. We can also find initiatives that link the two forms of community (in Poland, initiatives organised by the Barka Foundation or the Emaus Association are good examples), but by placing a strong emphasis on avoiding the syndrome of a “total institution”²⁶. The principles of participation in such “double” communities exemplify how the weaknesses of a total welfare institution are being avoided. For example, members of the Emaus community are so-called *companiononi*, people who mutually support each other through the process of social reintegration, but above all their task is to reorganise their lives and most of them can be only temporary residents of a given support centre.

Capitalising on the social and economic potential of the third sector

Activation programmes are in a large part organised by non-governmental organisations because they are more flexible and can thus more easily implement individual support programmes²⁷. It is also easier for organisations to overcome the demanding attitudes of programme beneficiaries, which deepen their marginalised status (through the process of self-marginalisation). The beneficiaries’ demands are not addressed to organisations but to the state and social workers because the former

²⁴ It is worth mentioning that *working houses* were not established in the 19th century as repressive institutions, but emerged in the 18th century as part of the concept of workshops that, in today’s language, we would say were designed to make participants independent.

²⁵ This does not mean that centres for social integration (CIS) are perfect and have no limitations. See: T. Kaźmierczak, *Centra integracji społecznej jako pomysł na przeciwdziałanie wykluczeniu społecznemu? Refleksje wokół Ustawy o zatrudnieniu socjalnym*, “Trzeci Sektor” 2005, No. 2.

²⁶ The phenomenon of side effects of living in total institutions was deeply analysed by Erving Goffman. See, for instance: E. Goffman, *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, New York 1961.

²⁷ See: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśza, *Aktywna polityka społeczna. Stan obecny i szanse upowszechnienia koncepcji*, “Analizy i Opinie” No. 48, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2006.

are to a much lesser extent viewed as institutions of social control. In my opinion, precisely this perception of associations and foundations is the reason that they have such a strong position in the social economy. Participants of “old social economy” initiatives had as many difficulties as people who are currently socially marginalised, but the former were victims of the “predatory capitalism” that existed during the industrialisation period, not of the over-protective social welfare measures of the state in the second half of the 20th century.

Rejection of the un motivating principle of de commodification

The concept of de commodification was formulated by social democrats and refers to achieving a situation of complete economic independence regardless of citizens’ activities on the labour market²⁸, and it was the focal point of an extreme interpretation of the welfare state. From the beginning, this concept was questioned by liberal and conservative critics of the welfare state, who emphasised that “free” support (entitlement o welfare with no obligations) to people who are capable of working is un motivating and demoralising²⁹. ASP undermines the legitimacy of the principle of de commodification “from the inside” and was introduced by those who “inherited” the welfare state model³⁰. The ASP concept does not preclude “giving for free”, but focuses on giving what is most needed: the possibility of participating in the social exchange of goods and services (not just their consumption). The rejection of the principle of commodification should not, however, lead us to the opposite extreme: we are not interested in limiting support, but in changing the kind of support that is offered.

4. Problems with Disseminating the Concept of Active Social Policy

In my view, the problems, which can be resolved only after deeper analysis and empirical studies, include: (1) unclear institutional boundaries of active social policy, and (2) conflict over measuring the effectiveness of ASP programmes. Among the existing documented and

²⁸ See: G. Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1990.

²⁹ See: L.M. Mead, et al., *From Welfare to Work. Lessons from America*, IEA Health and Welfare Unit, London 1997.

³⁰ See: M. Rymysza, *Aktywne polityka społeczna...*, *op. cit.*

analysed criticisms, I would mention: (3) the counter-effects of certain forms of social activation and (4) the partial delegitimation of the state's social function through ASP.

The unclear institutional boundaries of ASP programmes

It is not clear where the boundary between social activation programmes of social policy and active labour market policy (ALMP) programmes lies. This is not just a theoretical debate, especially not in Poland. On the central level, these boundaries are hazy, which translates into an unclear division of responsibilities between ministries and their departments in Poland. For example, when for unclear reasons the departments responsible for social policy issues for a short time were separated from the departments responsible for labour issues (traditionally most Cabinets in Poland have a Minister for Labour and Social Policy), the issue of social integration remained in the competences of the Ministry of Social Policy and not of the Ministry of Economy and Labour although it was precisely under this term that the idea of subsidised (social) employment was being promoted.

On the local level, however, these boundaries are strict and nearly unchangeable: social services and labour offices' services function alongside each other in Poland, although both are charged with the responsibility of activating the same social group of the long-term unemployed. There is a lack of institutional cooperation and for years we have witnessed a "transferring" of the most difficult beneficiaries between the labour offices and the social welfare centres.

The conflict over the efficiency of the concept of ASP

This conflict can be in a large part reduced to the question of whether activating the unemployed through the social economy sector contributes to raising the level of productive employment. If we *a priori* reject the two extreme sides of the debate: (i) that the social economy by its nature distorts the market (that the level of employment does not rise, but "normal" employment is replaced with subsidised employment), and (ii) that the redistribution of work is fair and just regardless of the economic results, then we must acknowledge the need to carry out extensive empirical research. It would appear that the results can vary between different local labour markets. Instead of taking a dogmatic position, it is worthwhile to search for the conditions that can increase the possibility of "positive sum games" and "zero sum games".

The second aspect of this conflict involves the question of whether ASP is an “economic” concept or “social” one. The answer to this question is not easy and largely depends on whether we consider the efficiency of ASP in a long- or a short-term perspective (short-term ASP means increasing expenditures and for this reason it is promoted in Poland through the use of the structural funds of the European Social Fund). We can note a significant difference between social activation programmes in Europe and in the United States. In the United States, *workfare* fosters the development of social entrepreneurship, not subsidised employment. The priorities of European Union policies, however, are different: subsidised employment is a means of institutionalising activation policies.

Criticism of the effectiveness of activation programmes

Some critics suggest that participation in activation programmes can produce a side-effect of stigmatising participants³¹. This phenomenon appears in two ways. The first is through the different treatment of programme participants by employers on the open labour market: people who have completed activation training programmes are often employed only in positions that are subsidised by the state and only for the duration of the subsidy or other benefit. The second is the “ghettoising” of the disabled through social cooperatives or sheltered employment. In both cases, full social reintegration is not achieved by the socially marginalised, which is the fundamental goal of both the ASP concept and the social economy.

A theoretical description of this state of affairs is provided by the theory of dual labour markets, which indicates that the impact of an increasing rate of transition from unemployment to employment is the segmentation of the labour market: the weaker work in one segment of the labour market or through more flexible and less secure arrangements³². Thus, the division between the economically active and inactive is replaced by a division between the first and second-class employed. Speaking metaphorically, by destroying one kind of wall, which maintained the social marginalisation of the weaker, we built a new one.

³¹ See: J.L. Laville, M. Nyssens, *Solidarity-Based Sector Organizations in the Proximity Services Field: A European Francophone Perspective*, “Voluntas” 2000, Vol. 11, No. 1.

³² See: E. Giermanowska, *Analiza upowszechniania nietypowych form zatrudnienia –na przykładzie przeciwdziałania bezrobociu młodzieży*, in: M. Rymśa (ed.), *Elastyczny rynek pracy i bezpieczeństwo socjalne. Flexicurity po polsku?*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2005.

It should nevertheless be noted, that the concept of flexicurity, which is currently developing in Europe, assumes that flexible employment does not have to be “worse”: with the proper legislation and management policies in firms these new forms of employment can and should be beneficial to employees, including those who have limited employment capacity³³.

Criticism of the partial delegitimisation of social protection programmes

The concept of ASP focuses on work with the unemployed who have the capacity to take up employment. We “lose sight” of the need to expand the scale of social welfare initiatives (and financial resources) targeted toward members of society who have permanent problems with being economically active (because of age, disability, etc.). This criticism becomes still more significant when we realise that it is particularly relevant to rapidly aging societies (such as in almost all European countries). In an extreme scenario, this kind of reductionism perceives people who are not economically active or those who cannot regain their “employment capacity” (employability) as “superfluous”. This view is dangerous.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that ASP is also developing to include activation methods for the elderly (the concept of active aging), which promote life-long learning or volunteer work alongside salaried employment³⁴. In this perspective, intermediary solutions between care and activation are being designed which do not entrench the division between the economically active and the inactive.

5. In the Direction of a Polish Model of the New Wave of Social Economy

It is worth considering the question of whether Poland’s experience to date with ASP methods in promoting social entrepreneurship will enable us to define the characteristics of the developing Polish model of the second wave of social economy.

³³ See: M. Rymcza, *W poszukiwaniu równowagi między elastycznością rynku pracy a bezpieczeństwem socjalnym. Polska w drodze do flexicurity?*, in: M. Rymcza (ed.), *Elastyczny rynek pracy...*, *op. cit.*

³⁴ This concept is termed active aging. See: M. Jansen, D. Foden, M. Hutsebaut (eds.), *A Lifelong Strategy for Active Ageing*, European Trade Union Institute, Brussels 2003.

The direction of development of the Polish model is without a doubt shaped by social entrepreneurship initiatives that are funded by the EQUAL Initiative. These initiatives benefit from broad public support, and through cooperation in the thematic groups (the thematic groups assemble projects with similar profiles; one of these groups is dedicated to the development of the social economy), they have a higher chance of impacting the mainstream of social policy than other initiatives. An analysis of the experiences with the EQUAL Initiative allows us to outline the developing Polish model and I will give it the working title of “The Polish approach to empowerment”. At the current stage, we can identify four characteristics: (1) an emphasis on investing in human capital while under-appreciating social capital; (2) a preference for “vertical inclusion” to the detriment of strengthening horizontal links based on mutuality (“horizontal inclusion”)³⁵; (3) a preference for active labour market programmes, but with a more difficult implementation of social welfare activation programmes; (4) the phenomenon of a convergence of some elements of non-governmental organisations involved in the social economy: from the *non-profit* form, to *not-for-profit* and finally to *not-for-private profit*³⁶.

The Polish approach to empowerment, experiences with IW EQUAL

A preference for investing in human capital

Projects carried out through the EQUAL Initiative are oriented toward building human capital, which is observable in terms of the preferences of both the institutions organising the projects (e.g. the popularity of training projects), and the administrative authority monitoring the projects (e.g. the number of new employment positions created for socially marginalised people is used as an indicator of success in project evaluation). Capitalising on and strengthening of social capital is under-appreciated. The level to which newly created social enterprises are “rooted” in the local community can turn out to be a deciding factor in the sustainability of the initiative after the project is complete and the funding source ends.

A preference for “vertical inclusion”

The EQUAL Initiative emphasises the value of, in the first place, supporting the socially excluded (activities “one for all”), and only in the second place of promoting mutual help (“the weaker help each other”). The more excluded a given community is, the more the task of implementing an activation project becomes a “priority”. This means, however, that the initiatives that are undertaken have a high economic risk and some of them have practically no chance of being sustainable.

³⁵ With reference to the types of social bonds and the role of social policy in strengthening them see: M. Rymysza, *Social Policy and Social Ties*, in: *On Solidarity* (volume with conference papers), Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna 2006.

³⁶ See: M. Rymysza, *Stara i nowa...*, *op. cit.*

A preference for an active social policy

Labour offices (called in Poland as *Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy – PUP*) more often than social welfare centres (*Ośrodki Pomocy Społecznej – OPS*) and with more enthusiasm declare interest in participating in projects designed to support the socially excluded through activation initiatives. Perhaps this difference results from the fact that the organisational culture of the work agencies is more suitable for project-oriented work. It seems significant, however, that the EQUAL Initiative projects focus on strengthening human capital. The act defining the role of PUP includes carrying out training programmes for the unemployed, employment mediation, etc. among their responsibilities; they are not, however, prepared to strengthen the local community. Such forms of support as community capacity building or local community activation are areas for which social services could potentially take responsibility. Unfortunately, such forms of activations are developing slowly in Poland, though there has been an increasing amount of activity through the EQUAL Initiative.

Convergence with the third sector

Non-governmental organisations became involved in the EQUAL Initiative not only because it presented new possibilities for effectively fulfilling their statutory goals, but also because it could strengthen their own economic potential. The condition of the third sector in Poland is weak and entering the track to the SE sector also means transitioning from non-profit, to not-for-profit and finally to not-for-private profit. This approach raises the following question (also from the legal perspective): at which point does a non-governmental organisation *de facto* become a social enterprise? This will require the appropriate legal modifications. Unfortunately, the government is preparing solutions that tend precisely in the opposite direction. For instance social cooperatives are treated by law as quasi NGOs.

Source: author.

The above-mentioned characteristics of the developing model suggest that we are benefiting only to a small degree from the rich tradition of the social economy in Poland, which dates back to the positivist activities of the partition period, and particularly in the *Wielkopolska* and *Małopolska* (historical Polish *Galicia*) regions, and was established during the inter-war period (one of the icons of this period is the village of Lisków³⁷). Why is this? The negative economic and social conditions are not the sole explanation of the transformation of the “old” social economy into the “new” one.

³⁷ We make reference to this example in the project “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków” through which this publication was made possible, in order to emphasise the need and the added value of effectively capitalising on the wealth of this history for the benefit of the second wave of the social economy. Effective capitalising also means being open to critical analysis, a principle that is documented in the work of Izabella Bukraba-Rylska, which appears in this compilation.

During the Polish People's Republic (PPR), communism unearthed the roots of cooperative activities, both in the economic and the theoretical dimension. The irony of real socialism was that it destroyed what it fought against as effectively as that which it supported. By incorporating cooperatives as an element of the communist economic system, it counter-posed it to the free market system. By the end of the Polish People's Republic, there was an opportunity to rebuild the cooperative movement because its objectives were close to the First Solidarity's (1980–1981) programme, but the imposition of Martial Law (December 1981) precluded this possibility.

The past decade of systemic transformation has been a return to the market economy but without the cooperative option. The social economy was excluded from the mainstream of institutional changes during the 1990s. This was in a large measure a delayed consequence of the PPR. The economic transformation meant “moving away from the old” or, in other words, the forms preferred in the centralised command economy. The social economy “smelled of socialism”, and its instruments and institutions were not considered part of the modern inventory of market instruments.

The current decade created the chance to undue or at least to complete the logic of the transformation. Decision-makers realised that a social policy founded on social security programmes as a response to economic reforms had exhausted its possibilities. It led not only to the creation and maintenance of a high level of unemployment, but above all, it lowered the economic activity of adult Poles to a level yet unknown in Europe³⁸. We realised the need to promote active forms of support and, simultaneously, Poland's accession to the European Union gave us the possibility to benefit from structural funds in order to develop such a social policy. We thus stood before the possibility of enrooting the social economy in a new social and economic system. Will we take advantage of this opportunity?

³⁸ See: T. Kaźmierczak, M. Rymśa, *Aktywna polityka społeczna... op. cit.*

Tomasz Kazmierczak

A Model for Community Development Work with Impoverished Rural Communities¹

1. What Is Community Development Work and Why Should We Engage In It?

The term *community development* refers to a special set of activities that are undertaken in a targeted and conscious manner in a selected community by a *community development worker*. These activities allow the community development worker to methodically intervene in the “natural” social relations and processes in the given community, thus influencing them in order to encourage sustainable and desired changes in the community. Community development as a targeted intervention has a limited time frame; the community development worker leaves the community once the development goals have been achieved.

Generally speaking, the essence of community development involves assisting existing local community groups (or helping to create new ones) in an unimposing and supportive way that enables the community

¹ The article is an English version of the paper published in Polish as: T. Kazmierczak, *Model animacji lokalnej w zaniedbanych społecznościach wiejskich*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008. The proposed model for community development work was prepared by the author of this article at the Institute of Public Affairs with advice and support from Marek Rymsza. The practical experience of four community development workers was also used in this text: Weronika Pylak, Dominik Skrzypkowski, Marek Śliwiński, and Rozalia Zając, who tested the model during their work in the field as a part of the project “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków”. The author supervised the work of the community development workers; the coordination work was done by Anita Sobańska. See attachment 1 to this paper (Editors’ note).

to participate in decision-making and organise around issues that significantly influence the community. In essence, community development involves activating a given community and strengthening it to develop economically and institutionally.

If community development is understood in this way, it is perfectly legitimate to question the meaning and need for community development: it could be assumed that after the decentralisation reforms in Poland in the late 1990s, local public affairs have been a matter of the local government². The local self-government system that was established as a result of those reforms gives community members a chance to influence the decisions and activities that are organised by local self-governments. It may thus seem that community development is a sort of luxury or usurpation of power from the local population. The most important reason for engaging in community development and thus a justification for the (low) expenses of such work is the fact that in places where the “community participates”, indicators such as quality of life, effectiveness in resolving problems, and the ability to achieve development goals are higher than in places where the community is passive or withdrawn. Public authorities can achieve a great deal but they are not able to do everything; cooperation with local partners allows the community to overcome the limits of the local self-governments. Moreover, the synergy effect achieved through collaboration increases the effectiveness of local social policy.

Thus, community development not only does not threaten local democracy but, on the contrary, it also strengthens it and makes it more effective by helping the community transform into a local civil society that is conscious of its interests and needs and is capable of working effectively and cooperating with the public administration. In this context, it can be understood that the weaker a local democracy is, and the more atomised, apathetic and inactive the community is, the more community development is needed. It should also be emphasised that in the same way that community development work is not a usurpation of the local population’s power, and the community development worker is not a usurper. The community development worker acts in accordance with the law and has permission from the public administration or civic organisations to fulfill the socially accepted goal/mission. In other words, the community worker cannot function in an institutional void.

² See: J. Hryniewicz (ed.), *Decentralizacja funkcji społecznej państwa*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2002.

Community development is thus a professional activity carried out within a given community in the form of a structured, methodical intervention with the goal of triggering a positive change in a given time frame. Previous experience shows that achieving sustainable and significant development requires time. The beginning of a development process and its growth requires a change in the attitudes and expectations of the community residents. Residents must also acquire new skills and perfect old ones, organisations must be established and their capacity developed; all of this takes time, and nothing can be artificially accelerated or imposed from above. In reality, sustainable change in a given community requires a perspective of 10 to 15 years. The development itself may not last that long, but a time frame of several years must be assumed.

2. The Community Development Model Outlined During the Project “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków”

The project “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy: Building a New Lisków” was organised by the Institute of Public Affairs with funding from the EQUAL Community Initiative. It was largely a social experiment. The community development model was the ultimate effect of the experiment and it was based on an analysis of the experience with project implementation in local communities and complemented with results from research conducted during the project. The model is one possible social policy instrument for initiating endogenous local forces for development. The model capitalises on the achievements of community development approaches implemented in Anglo-Saxon countries, in which the tradition dates back to the 19th century. The model can nevertheless be considered “new” in the sense that it places traditional community development work in a new and specific context and indicates new possibilities for practice.

We can indicate three distinguishing characteristics of the community development model designed by the Institute of Public Affairs: (a) it links community development with the establishment of social enterprises, (b) the target consists of underdeveloped communities and especially rural communities, and (c) external sources play the role of inspiration for change.

(a) Support for social enterprise

First, the model is unique in that it links community development with initiatives focused on social enterprise. The assumption is that the basic function of social enterprises is to be a motor, to mobilise and spread local development. Local development can appear as new activity, as a newly created social enterprise, social centre, institution, or non-governmental organisation, and it can evolve in every sphere of public life: the economy, culture, education, and society. Community development strengthens the community's capacity to be active by developing its internal strength and thus mobilising the development process. In particular, community development makes it easier to create social enterprises, for which social networks are the basic form of start-up capital. The social enterprise transforms social capital into economic, organisational and human capital. More importantly, not every social economy institution possesses this capacity, but only those that are sufficiently **embedded in the community** do.

The level of embeddedness of social enterprises depends on the following criteria:

- To what degree local resources (human, natural, cultural, etc.) were capitalised upon;
- To what degree local economic transactions were intensified;
- The level of engagement in local social networks;
- The level of involvement in local social affairs;
- To what degree the social enterprise is perceived by the local community as “ours”.

(b) Targeting underdeveloped communities

The second characteristic defined by the Institute of Public Affairs in the community development model is that it takes into consideration the specificities of the local community, which is the target for development initiatives. The model is designed for **small communities, primarily rural communities or towns**. The distinguishing factor of these communities is a low level of social and economic development: on the one hand, they have a relatively high level of poverty which results from a low level of involvement and/or economic capacity; on the other hand, a low level of social and political engagement is both the cause and effect of underdeveloped local institutional resources. Development work is thus directed to communities that need change the most but are also not able to initiate it on their own. They are not strong enough to begin the “road to development” without external aid.

(c) External sources inspire the development of local community resources

The third characteristic of the model results directly from the previous one: as shown through experience (and not only in our project “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków”), if the community is weak then **the inspiration for change must come from external sources**. In particular, this means that the community development worker comes into the community as an outsider. At the beginning, being “an outsider” poses a challenge for community development workers, but it simultaneously affords them a neutral and independent status in the community. Such a status is one of the key sources of legitimacy for the community worker and is thus important to maintain for the duration of the development work.

Being “an outsider” gives community development workers yet another role: they become a sort of bridge to the outside world for the impoverished community, which tends to be isolated and closed. Thanks to the skills and knowledge of the community development workers as well as their links with the surrounding environment, the community gains access to material and symbolic resources that were previously not available. In optimal conditions, the community development worker, and with his support the community as well, has access to the resources necessary to mobilise and continue development initiatives in the community.

3. Planning Community Development

In simple terms, community development is the activity that the community development worker carries out. The type and breadth of the community worker’s activity is determined by local specificities. It requires a minimum, threshold level of creativity from the community worker that all professionals require when confronted with a new task. The rest is a question of the knowledge and skills necessary for designing a development project that is appropriate for a given community and then flexibility in implementing the project (constant modifications based on actual conditions). Community development work is not a haphazard practice, but an organised intervention in the life of the community, implemented step by step according to a pre-prepared plan and controlled by the community development worker. As such, it is essentially proactive.

There are three points of reference that must be taken into consideration when planning community development projects: (a) community capacity, (b) the needs and interest of the community, and (c) the opportunities for economic development; in the case of our projects, it is the possibility to initiate social enterprises.

(a) Community capacity

The first point of reference is the community's capacity, understood as the series of factors that when taken together determine whether a given society is capable of taking action; if this is not possible, then it determines what level of effectiveness the society can achieve. We are chiefly concerned here with three factors: organisational resources (institutions), human capital, and social capital. At the beginning of a community development project, the community worker must evaluate the existing level of community capacity and define the level that should be achieved through the project, i.e. the level that will enable a dynamic development process to begin and continue. The extent of changes that take place as a result of the community worker's support should be defined. Community development work is thus always focused on building and expanding community capacity. If we expect to initiate sustainable change as a result of community development work, then we must achieve changes in the level of capacity: the development of organisational resources and/or human capital and/or social capital.

Rural communities that are underdeveloped socially and economically are usually communities with a low capacity; they rarely have organisations/institutions that focus on the needs/interests of their members and that can fulfill or express those needs/interests; residents lack the knowledge and specific skills necessary to effectively organise and/or to create such institutions and/or to manage them. The level of social capital clearly varies between regions, but even if strong internal links exist in a given community, it is a general rule that impoverished regions are also marginalised and have weak links and external contacts. Community development in such communities is thus "hard labour" – work must begin with the basics: to link people through networks, base organisations on these social links (e.g. local associations), and then to integrate these organisations into regional networks and teach organisation members how to manage their institutions and to cooperate with other institutions. The community development worker must break down the distrust and resistance, which always exists before introducing changes. However, community workers cannot impose or force the community into anything during the course of their work because they are not and cannot be a public authority. Depending on the amount of interest and the level of knowledge

and skills necessary to organise among the community residents, community workers encourage, facilitate, support, inform, instruct, inspire, persuade and sometimes actually carry out development activities themselves, but only in situations when the community residents are not able to complete the tasks independently. Community residents, on the other hand, take part in activities that would not exist (or would not be possible) without the intervention of the community development worker. During this work, the residents gain new skills and experiences and develop institutional structures that are necessary “here and now”, but which will develop and be helpful in the near and more distant future. In such a way, community capacity is built step by step, “brick by brick”.

(b) Community needs and interests

The second point of reference in our model is the **real existing needs and interests of the community**. The existing needs/interests can mobilise people to be active. The community development worker can be objectively correct in judging that, for example, a cooperative focused on buying and preparing forest mushrooms, fruits and other edible plants that grow abundantly in the area will resolve the problem of poverty in a given village. However, rushing into the initiative will only end in failure if the residents do not consider it to be important and worth their energy. Community development work must thus begin differently, with an activity that will “click” with the residents and involve those who are most likely to be interested. It is important to remember, however, that the majority will not participate; realistically, the community worker can count on only a small percentage of the residents to become involved.

(c) Social enterprise embedded in the community

The third point of reference is the objective defined for the community development work: in our model, the goal is to embed social enterprises in the community. Establishing the social enterprise should be determined by the approach to mobilising the community and developing its capacity, which depends on the existing level of community capacity and the residents’ level of preparation to engage in economic activities (in the near or more distant future). In other words, the community development project, both as a mobilising force and as an approach to strengthening the community’s development potential, should aim to create conditions in which a threshold number of community residents are personally interested in participating in a collective economic initiative. Creating a business plan and certainly initiating an enterprise exceeds the community development worker’s responsibilities.

A community development project cannot be too specific. The plan of action is a sort of screenplay that foresees the major events and the ultimate goals, but the actual process is an effect of an ongoing turn of events that are directed by the community worker who gives the events inertia and channels them toward the defined objective. Community development work is a process that influences the “here and now”, which requires community development workers to be open, flexible and prepared to modify their plans. This means that only two elements can be planned with relative precision: the community worker’s entrance into and exit from the community.

4. The Development Worker’s Position in and Relations with the Community

Community development workers enter the community as outsiders, but community development work requires that they become **important members of the community** in order to effectively influence the residents. For this reason, an appropriate relationship between the community worker and the community (its residents) is a prerequisite and serves as the basis for community development work. Building such relations is the first task that community workers must undertake. The community must perceive the development worker as trustworthy, objective, competent and effective, and the temperature, so to speak, of relations between the community worker and the community cannot be too “warm” or too “cold”. For example, if the relations were too “warm”, then the community worker would be treated as a “local”, a member of a given group or social category, and would not be able to influence the residents.

Both situations do not foster the relations necessary to carry out community development work. The relations should be “lukewarm”, so that they enable the community worker to influence the residents and simultaneously not to be considered a member of any given local group. Maintaining “lukewarm” relations allows the community worker to remain in the space between groups and serve as a bridge linking different groups, thus integrating the community. The appropriate positioning of community development workers in the community – who they are in the community rather than in what spheres they work – is perhaps still more important for community development work, which we understand as triggering activity among people and groups.

Building social relations is a process that lasts for the duration of the community development work; if it is carried out well then the relations deepen and strengthen while the community worker is given access to “insider information”. Gaining such information is an indicator of how deep the community development worker has “entered” into the community and has achieved a fuller connection with it. The process of building relations can be described as the process of building the community development worker’s informal authority based on his/her own character traits, i.e. personality and the effect of activities. Formal authority, which is given to the community development worker by the delegating institution, is the point of entry. It is thus important that the delegating institution is known to the community and respected. Legitimation from the institutional side guarantees community workers a level of confidence and trustworthiness that enables them to enter the community and then to prove their trustworthiness, skills and effectiveness. Their success becomes the foundation for further initiatives which can be more original. During the community development work, community workers can prove their qualifications and simultaneously shift the source of authority from the delegating institution to their own capacities.

Experience shows that the significance of **success in the early phase** is essential for the continuation of the community development worker’s activities; without success at the beginning and without establishing the appropriate relations between the community and the development worker, the chances of fulfilling project objectives are small.

5. The Phases of Community Development Work

We can distinguish three basic phases of community development work: (a) the preparation phase, (b) the actual development phase, and (c) the concluding phase.

(a) Building relations and learning about the community (the preparation phase)

First of all, the community development worker must focus on **building relations**. This requires establishing contacts, an end-goal in itself, which allows the community worker to learn about the community. During this phase, community development workers also search for inspiration/ideas for activities, such as a preliminary project that would interest and involve the community and allow the community

worker to build his/her authority. On the other hand, the collected information allows community workers to evaluate the local capacity. Community workers thus ask about the community resources, the level of organisational, human and social capital, the community's needs and problems, its weak and strong sides, and the structure and functioning of local government. On this basis, the community worker develops a development project. The actual project implementation takes place during the second phase of community development, which we understand primarily as building relations between people and institutions. The first phase is devoted to entering the community and learning about it and then identifying people and/or institutions who are potential partners for future work; the early phase of a community development project is also useful for achieving this goal.

Ofentimes, initial projects are directed toward children or youth. This approach is usually adopted because these groups are relatively easy to define and engage in activities. Previous experience shows that the adult population can be more effectively approached in this way, and specifically, by addressing the parental role of supporting the children involved in the project.

(b) Implementation of the plan (the actual development phase)

Community development workers can begin the second phase of actual development work after they have done the following: built relations on at least a minimum threshold level, become involved in local social networks, met key people and institutions, and gained an understanding of the community's possibilities and limitations. The plan for the community development work should have already been created during the first phase. Community development work can involve all or some of the factors that influence the level of community capacity. On the one hand, the work is concerned with educating the community, while on the other hand it is focused on building and strengthening social networks internal to the community as well as the community's links to the outside, organising residents into groups and organisations, strengthening their effectiveness and efficiency, and building communication channels and cooperation between organisations.

The intermediary goals of community development work are achieved through specific projects that are organised with varying degrees of foresight. Flexibility is always key. Regardless of how the ideas for these projects arise, it is the community worker who is ultimately responsible for their shape and content. It is especially important that the community worker "**stays in the shadows**" of the community: the community

worker should describe the community as the “parent of success”. In our community development model, the community development worker is not a community leader.

(c) Concluding phase

Well guided community development work triggers cooperative and collaborative processes that alter the institutional character of the community and change the residents’ attitudes. When these processes attain a “critical mass” the community development workers can move to the final phase of their work, i.e. **a progressive exit**. Community development workers must ultimately leave, and they should do so with a certainty that the community is self-sufficient.

The duration of each of the above described phases of community development cannot be clearly demarcated. It can be assumed, nevertheless, that the beginning phase should not last longer than a few months or a year. The concluding phase is shorter. The length of time needed to carry out community development work depends on the specificity of the community and on the development worker’s objectives: it can last several months or several years.

Community development work should not be carried out too intensively and the community development worker should not visit the community too frequently or spend too much time within the community. The community must have time to mature with the decisions that are taken and the changes that are taking place; it also needs space to be able to undertake its own initiatives. Community workers must adjust their work rate to the rate at which the community and its residents change; the saying “two steps forward, one step back” appropriately expresses the tempo of work. Not following these principles may mean that community development workers impose their will onto the community and relieve the community of responsibly, which only stifles its activity and is thus contrary to the objective of community development work.

6. The Knowledge and Skills of the Community Development Worker

Community development is understood in our model as a professional activity. What kind of knowledge and skills should a professional community development worker possess? Undoubtedly, we can mention three fields of knowledge and skills. They include:

- knowledge about the functioning mechanisms of the community;
- knowledge about the mechanisms of change in the community;
- skills to methodically trigger and implement change in the community.

The above described model of community development requires the community development worker to possess skills and knowledge in one more field: **the social economy**. Community development is based on work with people, for people and through people. Thus, the skills and knowledge of the community development worker are crucial at each phase. They are decisive in the development of interpersonal relations, contacts and relations within and between groups as well as the evolution of contacts and relations in public forums where the every-day work of the community worker takes place. Using these skills also requires expressing respect for the dignity and the right of self-definition of community residents, regardless of their social status.

Even having highly-developed skills will not protect the community development worker from experiencing moments of doubt, uncertainty, or emotional fatigue. These moments will unavoidably arise; it is the nature of social work with people with different personalities, cultural upbringing, needs and interests, and moreover, who have free will. For this reason, an integral part of the community development model is the supporting role of the delegating institution for the community worker. Support should include both psychological and merit-based support (advice about issues related to development work) as well as the opportunity to improve the community worker's skills (training programmes).

* * *

The community development model designed during the project “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków” is also a proposal for a solution to a problem that has adamantly existed for centuries: the underdevelopment of rural areas. The first to address this challenge were the “patronising intelligentsia” between the 19th and the 20th century. One of them was Father Waclaw Bliziński, author of the success story in the village of Lisków. The proposed model symbolically integrates the experiences of these early intelligentsia community workers, but also attempts to revitalise this tradition. It should thus be a practical bridge “between the olden times and the modern times”. It seems that this tradition is particularly valuable now that

Poland's integration into European structures creates opportunities for development.

On the other hand, this model benefits from the most modern social theories. It reaches back to community development models developed in the United Kingdom and the United States where this kind of social work is especially developed. It is interesting that the basic goals of these models have a universal and timeless character; the fact that certain elements can be identified in Father Bliziński's work in Lisków is proof of this.

The proposed model for community development is thus based in the community and links it to the past in order to face the challenges of the future. We expect that in the coming years the citizens' quality of life will increasingly depend on the strength and efficiency of local/regional communities and social capital will be the most significant factor in building strong communities. Achieving these conditions is the ultimate goal of the proposed community development model.

Attachment No. 1

Information about the Activities of Community Workers during the Project "Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy –: Building a New Lisków"

The project "Toward the Polish Model of Social Economy: We Are Building the New Lisków" was a kind of social experiment and involved two types of activities: implementation work and research work. Both activities were focused on *social enterprises embedded in the community*, which were considered as a sort of engine that stimulates the local development process. The project was in a large part inspired by the "historical" experience of the village of Lisków during the period when Father Waclaw Bliziński lived there and activated the community. This experience teaches us that basing economic activity on social networks that are open "to outside influences" is the appropriate foundation not only for economic success, but also for mobilising development processes in other domains of community life such as the social, cultural and educational domains. It is thus the basis of what we call sustainable development.

In the project "new Lisków" creating a social enterprise that is embedded in the local community was the task of local committees

(Local Partnerships). These committees were formed in four Poviats: Ełk and Nidzica in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship, and in Biłgoraj and Lublin-Ziemski in the Lublin Voivodship. Local partner institutions decided on the membership of the committees and their structure as well as what kinds of enterprises would be formed, where and how. Consequently, each committee was different and the enterprises that were ultimately created were also different.

The task of working with the communities and developing their social capital, so that the enterprises that were founded by external forces could be locally embedded, belonged to the community development workers. “Embedding” – in the simplest terms – means to establish and strengthen mutually beneficial links between the enterprise and the community. Four community development workers were recruited. They received training in the United Kingdom (the training was prepared by the established British non-profit organisation, the *Community Development Foundation*). The community development workers then went into the field in September of 2006. According to the project plans, there were four of them, one in each Poviats. It was also expected that the community workers would be young graduates in the field of social sciences who have some experience with community development work, but for whom the community development work in this project would be the beginning of their career rather than the conclusion. It is worth noting that the basic conditions of community development work, the place and realistic opportunities for development were determined by the local committees. The communities’ openness toward the development workers’ activities also varied and influenced the possibilities for collaboration. Thus, not only were the communities in which the community development workers began their activities different, but also the attitude of local partners toward the community development workers varied.

The contracts with the community development workers initially foresaw one year of work, which was a very short period. Despite this, the community development workers had surprisingly good outcomes, which in three cases substantiated the extension of grants for another half a year. Within the project, community development work could not be continued.

Each of the community development workers worked independently to implement their own action plan. The development workers met once a month in order to discuss any problems that arose and plans for their work in the near and more distant future. During these meetings, the community workers also benefited from professional psychological

support and participated in workshops designed to improve their communications skills.

The community development work carried out during the project “Toward a Polish Model of the Social Economy – Building a New Lisków” was oriented toward communities that are socio-economically underdeveloped (impoverished, marginalised). The objective was to inspire and initiate grassroots economic, social and cultural initiatives that would enable residents to gain and improve their social and economic skills and that would also become a source of income, support and personal development. In the long-term perspective, these initiatives would improve the quality of life in the communities. Achieving these general goals required that community development workers raise the community capacity and in particular the level of social capital.

As part of the project, development work was organised in five communities – Prostki and Golubie (in the Ełk Powiat), Kamionka (Nidzica Powiat), Krężnica Jara (Lublin Powiat) and Korytków (Biłgoraj Powiat) – and was led by four development workers: Marek Śliwiński (Prostki and Golubie), Dominik Skrzypkowski (Kamionka), Weronika Pylak (Krężnica Jara) and Rozalia Zając (Korytków Duży)³. The community development workers’ domains of activity included:

- organising the community in order to create local groups/organisations, which complete specific tasks;
- developing existing local groups/organisations to increase their capacity and level of cooperation and efficiency in achieving defined goals;
- working with local groups/organisations on establishing/strengthening cooperative relations within the community as well as with institutions outside of it;
- constructing and upholding links (formal and informal) within the community that determine the quality of cooperation;
- embedding social enterprises and other initiatives inspired “from the outside” or “from above” in the community (establishing them in the local networks).

³ More about mentioned above activities undertaken by mentioned above community development workers in: M. Dudkiewicz, T. Kaźmierczak, I. Rybka (with assistance of A. Sobańska and P. Sobiesiak), *Animacja lokalna. Jak aktywizować społeczności wiejskie?*, Academy for Philanthropy Development in Poland and Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2008.

Kamionka is a small village not far from the town of Nidzica. A Local Partnership, led by the Foundation "Nida", was implementing a project called the "Pottery Village" in Komionka and a community development project was being implemented simultaneously. The goal of the community development project was to strengthen the social capital of the village, which would enable the community to better capitalise on the opportunities created by the "Pottery Village" project. The measurable effect of the work with the village residents was the establishment of a local organisation, the Association for the Development of Mazurian Villages – "We want it", whose members supported the "Pottery Village" initiative with a project entitled "Drying Herbs", which was to build the economic capital of the village Kamionka by growing and selling dried herbs and was cofinanced by the Rural Development Foundation. Furthermore, the association has cooperated with local government representatives in order to open an old community centre in a nearby village, which would also activate the residents.

The "Pottery Village" is a cluster of social enterprises established with the help of several different institutions. Among the products and services they offers are: ceramics, blacksmithing, furniture refurbishing, sowing regional and historical clothing, herb growing, cosmetics, regional souvenirs, regional cuisine, tourism services (including Mazurian weddings), training programmes, and conferences.

Kreżnica Jara is a village in the gmina of Niedzwica Duża, located around 20 km from the town of Lublin. The community development project was designed to build cooperative relations between local organisations, institutions and residents. The community development worker helped establish the Association for Creators of Culture – "Red Squirrels". A group of young people played a key role in the association. This association is now the main initiator of cultural events in the gmina. On the 1st of December 2007, the village community of Kreżnica Jara donated an old school building (belonging to the public administration) to the "Red Squirrels" so that they could organise and run a rural cultural-social centre there. The "Red Squirrels" de facto run a social enterprise that works in the field of cultural services. Once the centre develops, it will expand to provide local integration services. The "Red Squirrels" cooperate with gmina institutions such as the Cultural Centre in Niedzwica Duża, the Association "Women's Centre", the Association for Children and Youth – "Forget-me-not", the informal youth group – "Inspiration", the Rural Development and Education Foundation in the town of Niedzwica Kościelna – "Pigeonhole".

The social enterprise called Association EMAUS also works in the village of Kreżnica Jara and employs and trains the long-term unemployed and homeless, particularly those belonging to the EMAUS collective. The enterprise has two production and service workshops: carpentry (focused on the production of outdoor garden furniture, fireplaces, and a lumberyard); and a locksmith and welder workshop (including metal construction, park benches).

Korytków is a village nearby Biłgoraj on the Lubelska expressway. Many of the village residents remember that the Village Home-owners' Circle and the Village Youth Union once activated the village. In more recent times, however, activity in the village has stopped. The community development project was dedicated to mobilising the village through the school-aged youth. First, they searched for significant local historical monuments. Then the youth helped to establish dance, photography and journalism lessons, which were cofinanced as part of the project "Act locally". The work carried out by the community development worker activated the community of Korytków so much that the school is now "full of life" and the residents also initiated the Association for the Support of Local Development and Integration – "Patria". Seventy people attended the founding meeting of the Association, which beat the village records (only 20 people came to the 2006 meeting to vote on the local government representative).

Prostki and Golubie – these villages are characterised by typical symptoms of exclusion and marginalisation. In both, Local Partnerships inspired the creation of social cooperatives. The goal of the community development work was to raise the level of community capacity in both villages and to embed the cooperatives that were founded in the community. The first phase of work in the village of Prostki was the Academy of Young Media Savvy Leaders, which was an educational project for youth organised for half a year with the Local Gmina Cultural Centre. It included workshops on media and journalism and the establishment of a well-functioning local information service (www.naszeprostki.pl), which was visited by over 30,000 people during the first six months. The success of the Academy allowed the community development worker to inspire the residents to found the Association for Social Initiatives – "Our Prostki", which will be the main partner for the cooperative in activities aiming to promote development in Prostki. In Golubie, the community development worker supported the creation of the Rural Movement of (Voluntary) Community Development Workers, which carried out activities in the gmina of Kalinowo – the project's goal is to train 4/5 residents from each of four selected villages; the task of these trained community workers/volunteers will then be to activate their local community.

In Prostki, the Social Cooperative, Centre for Professional Training – "Old School" professionally produces children's toys and educational support for kindergartens and social support centres. The social cooperative in the town of Golubie also runs a studio for weavers, tailors and upholstery, ceramic makers, blacksmiths, and carpenters.

The capacity of each of the five communities in our project had a significant influence on the type and breadth of development activities that the community workers undertook in such a short time, as well as on the possible outcomes of their work. The strategy documents that were adopted by the local community committees defined the relations between

the community development workers and the firms that were established. Although their mission within the project “Toward the Polish Model of Social Economy: We Are Building the New Lisków” was completed after a year and a half of work, the community development work should continue for at least one more year.

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