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**Agata Pierścieniak**

**Abstract**

The article presents considerations on collaboration, presenting it from a subjective and objective perspective as a determinant of local development. This is the voice in the discussion on the importance of collaboration in the local activity of local government units in Poland, which presents two key issues related to conducting research on the phenomenon of cooperation.  First, the basic dimensions of local development have been identified, within which collaboration can be identified. It was pointed not only to the developmental context in the social, economic or ecological area, but also criteria such as spatial location or types of collaboration results were identified. The meaning of collaboration presented in this way indicates its subjective role in local development. Secondly, the main areas of research on the collaboration phenomenon were highlighted, distinguishing them from the perspective of taking office activity, i.e. the perspective of the research subject. In this aspect three dimensions are indicated: the area of office preparation for collaboration, the area of collaboration and the area of collaboration results. The analysis of the phenomenon of collaboration as determinants of local development from the subjective and objective perspective will help in organizing knowledge about collaboration.

**Key words:**collaboration, cooperation, local development, local government unit

**JEL: L3, L14, H70, H79**

**INTRODUCTION**

Collaboration is an indicator of the development of contemporary organizations and institutions. In management sciences, this is a new paradigm designated by the functioning of organizations associated in networks. In economics, this is a trend setting directions of actions that lead to achieving objectives at the macro and micro level, which lead to the development of economies, GDP growth or the shaping of prosperity. The study of the phenomena of cooperation is an important trend that in modern science enriches knowledge not only economic but also social. A special note of research, which is gaining importance is the location which, as an international intellectual and organizational trend, is permanently and multifaceted in both the theory and the real sphere. For half a century, this area of research has been developing (Sztando, 2017 s.12). As part of this trend, researchers point to various determinants of local development. Theoretical concepts, as well as empirical studies confirm that potential resources of local governments in the form of decision-making power, knowledge, financial resources and regional development policy tools can have a stimulating effect on local development (Jastrzębska, Lechwar, 2009). An important element of these considerations is the combination of observations and analyses resulting from practice with trends that in the future will pose challenges for organizations and institutions

The aim of the article is to show the role of cooperation in local development and, more specifically, research levels, which will allow the diagnosis of this phenomenon in reality. The article is of a theoretical nature, where deduction of significant cause and effect relations between variables on local development and cooperation has been demonstrated.

1. **Local development – the essence of the concept**

Local development is a priority for all institutions that are associated with local government and those that create a policy of support for local activities. It can therefore be said that this is the goal of government and local government institutions. Local development is a multidimensional concept and is perceived as quantitative and qualitative changes taking place in the social and economic functioning of local government units (Markowski 2008; Grzebyk 2017). The complexity of the concept can be considered, among others from the internal and external perspective as well as endo and exogenous factors. The most widespread analysis is from the perspective of the main dimensions of sustainable development. K. Pajak (2003) distinguishes three basic areas such as:

* The social sphere that concerns the development of inhabitants of a given area through gaining higher education and greater awareness as citizens of the region. The duties of local self-government in this sphere of development can include, among others satisfying the collective needs of residents in the field of social assistance, education and security.
* The economic and spatial sphere concerns the natural environment and spatial order. In this area, we distinguish activities such as reduction of pollutant emissions, as well as care for environmental resources.
* The economic sphere that concerns the development of individual and collective entrepreneurship.

Other researchers add ecological or environmental aspects to this list, emphasizing their important role in sustainable development.

Local development influenced by various factors, which are not constant over time, and therefore should be subjected to continuous and ongoing analysis. The basic factors influencing or limiting local development according to A. Jakubowska (2013) include:

– external and internal factors (external results from the relationship with the external, national or international environment, internal results from resources, management skills, local authority activities, climate for business operations),

– macroeconomic and microeconomic factors (macroeconomic factors are those that do not depend on local entities and are shaped at the national or international level, e. g. setting tax rates or a free trade agreement, microeconomic factors are those that local authorities can influence),

– spatial factors (regionally or locally differentiated) and spatial (same throughout the country),

– hard and soft factors (hard factors are those that can be measured and specified, eg access to infrastructure, location and connection to external networks of energy and heating infrastructure services (power, gas, heating, renewable energy), industry structure, size and type ownership of existing business entities, soft factors are in turn those that are difficult to measure, e. g. creativity and innovation).

Interestingly, in Polish scientific literature, cooperation is not commonly mentioned in the group of factors determining local development. Few researchers (Pierscieniak 2015, Pierscieniak 2015a, Gray K 2015) note that its importance is important not only for the functioning of organized forms such as organizations or institutions, but also can be an important element for improving the functioning and development of local structures such as municipalities.

Local development is primarily related to the implementation of tasks assigned to local self-government. In Poland, legal acts assign self-government tasks and commissioned tasks. Own tasks of commune offices concern, for example, spatial and ecological order (e. g. spatial planning, protection of the natural environment, combating natural disasters), social infrastructure (e. g. education, health care, social services, cultural institutions), technical infrastructure (e. g. roads, bridges, waterworks, public transport), public safety and order (e. g. fire protection, sanitary security, municipal guards) (Jakubowska 2013) In addition, the local government must carry out commissioned activities such as running a civil registry office, an agricultural census, organizing parliamentary elections and others (Act on municipal self-government, Article 7 paragraph 1).

Considering the above considerations, it is worth considering the role of cooperation in local development and indicate its dimensions and levels.

1. **The role of collaboration in local development – dimensions and levels**

Collaboration is a desirable phenomenon and commonly found in the activities of local government. To answer the question of whether it can be identified as a management tool, it is worth analyzing its essence in terms of the features indicated above. The joint action implemented as part of LGU is multidimensional (Pierscieniak 2014) It is implemented both outside and outside of a public organization. From the theoretical perspective, these are two different activities differently described in English as cooperation and collaboration. Internal cooperation defined as participation is treated as a process (Długosz, Wygnańska 2005) or a community of actions (Skrzypiec 2002, Starosta 1995) and the activity of formal or less formal groups constituting the basis of civil society (Hausner 1999) and characterized by the inclusion or active participation of residents of the commune in matters that matter to her. Collaboration occurring between organizations is understood as initiating, planning, and implementing projects in cooperation with other ISTs. It can take place in the economic and social sphere, in the form of joint ventures, in the sphere of public services, in the area of obtaining and using public funds (Zarzycki, Mazur 2004). Another manifestation of activity is coopetition identified as a combination of cooperation and competition (Koszel 2015). Analyzing the functioning of the commune office and its activities from the perspective of the role of joint action in local development, one can indicate the relation between the activity of the commune office and its impact on development. The results of the conducted analysis are systematized according to the selected criterion (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Collaboration in local development – selected dimensions

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| Dimensions according to the criterion | Types of cooperation | Impact on development |
| **Impact on elements of sustainable development** |
| Social | Cooperation, social participation, | Strengthening public participation in co-decision, neighbourhood support, participation of inhabitants in the implementation of tasks |
| Economics | Cooperation, collaboration, coopetition, | Working together for the local good from the institution’s perspective support for local business; from the business perspective, participation in public life, support for the institutions, co-deciding on the directions of economic, social and environmental changes |
| Ecological | Cooperation,Collaboration,social participation, | Activity of various entities (residents, business and institutions) for joint activities related to environmental protection, promoting the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). |
| **Placing the results of the joint work** |
| Internal | cooperation | Activities aimed at participation in institutional and social and business internal initiatives, implemented by participants of local public life. |
| External | collaboration | The actions, which aim to participate in initiatives that contribute to the objectives of the Interior through joint actions with external entities such as. The share of local government in Integrated Territorial Initiatives[[1]](http://economic-spectrum.eu/collaboration-as-a-determinant-of-local-development-research-challenges/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1). |
| **Spatial implications** |
|  Local | Cooperation, collaboration,social participation, | Public participation in the implementation of public tasks, joint activities with organizations and business for the benefit of the local community. |
| Regional | Collaboration, Cooperation | Joint activities related to the implementation of tasks at the regional level, engaging in initiatives with a regional dimension, participation in consortia and teams implementing regional objectives. |
| **Cooperation/collboration results (effects)** |
| Hard | Collaboration, cooperation,social participation, | Measurable indicators achieved through common actions that can be identified. |
| Soft | Measurable knowledge, skills, shaping attitudes and experience acquired as part of the ongoing cooperation at the local level. Formal and informal relationships, customs, behaviours, culture understood as a set of rules created as a result of joint local activities |

Source: own study

The activity of the office as an entity implementing collaboration or being a partner in a collaboration implies positive effects in the social or economic sphere. Analyzing such activities, one can indicate its effects and evaluate them from the perspective of various impact criteria, e. g. in spatial aspects (local, regional), identification of the objectives of joint action (internal and external), or the diagnosis of its effects of the obtained results of collaboration.

Identifying the types of collaboration and cooperation what is determining their significance from the perspective of the selected analysis criterion is an important stage in the construction of research into the role of collaboration and cooperation in local development.

1. **Collaboration for local development-research challenges**

The research on the phenomenon of collaboration in relation to the variable that is local development can be identified from a different perspective. In the literature on the subject, one can find attempts to systematize the methodology of research on the phenomena of collaboration. It concerns many areas, including factors of collaboration development or levels of its development (Prytula, Tsybulska , Kalat , Tsisinska, 2017)

The essence of the analysis of the phenomenon of collaboration is to recognize it as a research object (Figure 2). Treating it as a subject of research, it is possible to propose a study of this phenomenon in three main dimensions.  The first one is preparing the organization for collaboration. Usually, these are opportunities, opportunities, and organizational resources necessary to carry out the collaboration. Identification of the state of organization preparation determined by researchers, including as antecedencies, abilities  (Pisarska. Karpacz 2017) or potential for collaboration (Pierscieniak 2015). This area related to the preparation of an organization for activity related to a joint action requires the diagnosis of the organization as an entity that undertakes collaboration (Fig. 2)

**Fig. 2 Cooperation as a research object – main elements**

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Source: own study

The level of the process is the second level that is important for identifying the phenomenon of collaboration. Diagnosis of mechanisms taking place in the framework of joint actions allows identification of factors that are important from the perspective of the effectiveness of activities contributing to the desired results. Recognition of the office’s activity in this area allows their assessment in terms of effectiveness or efficiency. The diagnosis of the implemented processes also allows their improvement. The third level is the area of collaboration effects most widely recognized in the literature on the subject. Collaboration as a research object in the convention proposed in Fig. 2, analyzed as a determinant of local development, allows to deepen the knowledge on the potential of organizations such as LGs or NGo to cooperate. This knowledge can be helpful in preparing an organization for effective collaboration. Diagnosis and analysis of processes taking place in organizations cooperating for local development allows them to be improved and adapted to the nature of collaboration. The analysis of the effects of cooperation allows learning about these areas that may have a direct impact on local development. The above diagram is one of the proposals for collaboration research focusing on its objective nature. In the scientific literature there are many works dealing with the issues of collaboration from different perspectives, e. g. researching relationships, networks or cluster structures, or its impact, effects on the environment, e. g. creating innovations.

**CONCLUSION**

Collaboration for contemporary regions is very important. Its importance is associated with effects that can be considered from the perspective of many criteria. The article points to selected criteria emphasizing the local or regional spatial impact, the impact on particular elements of sustainable development such as the social, economic or ecological area.  Attention was also paid to the results of a joint action identifying them in the soft and hard categories. From the perspective of the effectiveness of cooperation, which determines local development – from an institutional perspective, it is worth paying attention to its objective nature. Studying cooperation from this perspective in three levels of collaboration (preparation, process or effects) is a significant challenge to improve its effectiveness and impact on local development.

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[[1]](http://economic-spectrum.eu/collaboration-as-a-determinant-of-local-development-research-challenges/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1) Integrated Territorial Investments is an instrument of territorial development, referred to in art. 36 of the general regulation and art. 7 of the ERDF regulation. These provisions specify that part of the funds from the allocation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in 2014-2020 in Poland is allocated to integrated actions for sustainable development of urban areas, as well as that the „municipalities“ indicated in these documents are responsible at least for tasks related to the selection of projects for co-financing – including as an intermediary institution in the system of implementing EU funds.