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Civil Society, Governance and Community Sustainable Development: A Cognitive Approach on the Example of Rural Poland

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The article covers the problem of relations between civil society, governance and sustainable development. It assumes that the integration and cooperation of all social actors as well as the forms of knowledge they use to define development objectives are indispensable conditions to sustainable development, and that civil society and governance structures are crucial mechanisms in such integration. The article argues that the meaning of sustainable development is the object of a struggle between the values shared by different actors and represented by different types of knowledge. It discusses the changing meanings of sustainable development as well as the role of civil society and governance structures as mechanisms in the integration of various actors and their rationales in decision-making about development. It identifies the different models of civil society and governance structures and analyses their impact on sustainable development. To illustrate the role of various models of civil society and governance structures in the implementation of sustainable development programs, the article provides case studies from rural Poland.

Keywords: sustainable development, civil society, governance, knowledge

Introduction: in search of the essence of progress

In any discussion on development one should start with a question about the essence of progress. The answer is of great importance, as it determines the objectives formulated in development programs and implemented in definite social realities. Generally speaking, progress is ‘such directional changes of a certain object, a class of objects, or a domain of reality which, with respect to some of their characteristics, are important to the observer, and at the same time receive positive evaluations, evaluation criteria or evaluation standards are applied to them’ (Nowak 1990: 230). Progress is thus relative, as its assessment depends on the values of those who evaluate changes (cf. Chambers 1997, Anderson at al. 2016). It is also a matter of knowledge used in evaluation processes. Different actors share different types of knowledge based on presumptions about social reality, social order, and everyday life as well. They compete for a right to decide on the objectives and methods of change, and make the development discourse a constant struggle over the meanings of development and values which define the essence of progress.

Particularly, three basic forms of knowledge can be identified: expert (or scientific), managerial, and local lay knowledge (Bruckmeier 2004). Expert knowledge is generated by researchers and scientists as the result of scientific investigation. Such knowledge is considered 'objective', verified, universal and formally legitimised. Managerial knowledge is generated and used mainly by politicians, decision-makers, administrators and managers. This is strategic knowledge about decision-making processes, organisations' functioning, and social system dynamics. Local knowledge is locally and culturally specific, derived from long-standing experience, often orally transmitted, and learned in informal and private contexts of family and face-to-face interaction, in neighbourhoods, from local cultural traditions and practices. This is the knowledge of 'laics', based on everyday life experience of 'how things work'.

Different forms of knowledge are thus supposed to compete for a right to define the essence of progress and the dominant groups decide what progress is and is not. In defining progress, they set the rules according to which progress is to be achieved. That, in turn, means that in depriving some groups the right and the opportunity to define progress, one may exclude them from the process of progress entirely. Generally speaking, there are two competing ideas of progress which refer to different forms of knowledge: an economic globalisation paradigm and an alternative one (cf. Piontek 2000). In the economic globalisation paradigm, progress is an equivalent to economic growth which – comprehended as maximisation of profits and productivity growth – takes GDP as its main indicator. This is a 'technocratic' understanding of progress, with managerial and expert (scientific) knowledge being the dominant forms. Nevertheless, progress understood this way is 'a polarizing process, creating wealth in some regions and poverty, unemployment, marginalisation and exclusion in others' (Lawrence 2005: 154; cf. Bauman 2004). Globalisation prioritises global markets and corporations over communities, which are thereby condemned to social vegetation. The human dimension of development is lost, and human subjectivity is taken away.

Various alternative concepts of development have arisen based on criticism of the globalisation paradigm, with the concept of 'sustainable development' having turned out to be the most inspiring and popular, 'one of the promises for future progress regionally, nationally and globally' (Lawrence 2005: 145). It assumes the integration of various actors in defining development, as well as the empowerment of local communities. However, the meaning of sustainable development seems to change over time and never stops being the object of a struggle over values shared by different actors representing different types of knowledge. In this paper I take a closer look at this problem. I discuss the changing meaning of sustainable development and the role of civil society and governance structures as mechanisms of the integration of various actors and their rationales into decision-making over development. First, I present the concept of sustainable development and the major shifts within the discourse on sustainability. Then I analyse the role that civil society is assumed to play in the implementation of ideals of sustainable development, identifying different models of civil society (or civic communities) and their consequences for models of sustainable development. Next, I discuss the concept of governance and its significance for civil society and sustainable development. I identify three models of local governance and indicate their possibilities and limits for sustainable development. In order to better illustrate the role of various models of civil society and governance structures in the implementation of sustainable development programs, I describe some case studies from rural Poland and discuss the impact of civil society and governance on the success or failure of their sustainability ideals, as well as the challenges and dangers that emerge in practice.

Sustainable development

The first widely accepted definition of sustainable development comes from a document of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), known as the 'Brundtland

Report'. Published in 1987 and entitled "Our Common Future", it presents the results of four years' work on the concept of sustainable development, which, according to the Commission, was to become the most important concept and guideline for the policy of nation states in the 21st century. The Commission proposes to define 'sustainable development' as that development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987).

Initially, the term referred exclusively to the natural environment and ecology, and accordingly, sustainable development was characterised as 'eco-development'. The natural environment started to be perceived in terms of capital, which relation John Blewitt defines as the 'capitalization of sustainable development' (Blewitt 2008: 4). In addition to traditional financial capital, other forms of capital are recognised as equally significant for development, namely: human capital, understood as human skills and education, social capital, understood as social networks and relationships, and natural capital, which is divided into renewable and non-renewable resources. The concept of critical natural capital refers to those aspects of the global ecosystem which human life and culture directly depend on (ibidem: 4). Human activity uses up natural capital, and in the process, interferes with the functioning of the ecosystem and its self-regulating ability. In place of irrecoverably lost resources of natural capital, different types of substitutes are sought, for example, renewable energy sources. The problem of sustainability thus refers to the extent to which a given form of capital can be replaced by capital of another kind. Blewitt presents three different viewpoints on this problem. In the 'strong' meaning, sustainability implies keeping natural capital intact so that future generations can inherit the same amount of it. In the 'soft' meaning, the need to maintain those critical capital resources is only mentioned. The 'very soft' meaning focuses on the fact that the loss of natural resources should not be greater than the increase in human and man-made capital (2008: 5).

The meaning of sustainable development has broadened with time to the field of economy and society. It is believed that sustainable development is a process occurring simultaneously on three interrelated levels: ecological, economic and social. Therefore, the concept of sustainable development is sometimes referred to as the 'three-Es paradigm' (economy, ecology and equity; cf. Wheeler 2004). On the ecological dimension, the idea of sustainability expresses opposition to overexploitation and is implemented through the protection of natural resources and the reduction of waste. Economic sustainability consists in maintaining capital reserve undepleted, thus limiting consumption to such an extent that it does not limit the number of input resources. Social sustainability is understood in terms of social justice and is achieved through the 'systematic involvement of community members and representatives of developed civil society' (Goodland 1995: 3), through social inclusion and the prevention of marginalisation. Thus, the concept of sustainable development is humanised and covers all spheres of human activity.

Further, the concept of sustainable development involves three basic ideas: durability, self-support and integration (Adamski/Gorlach 2006). The idea of the durability of development, sometimes also referred to as the principle of 'intergenerational justice' (cf. Lawrence 2005), points to 'the need to adopt such a transformation strategy that does not destroy the natural, economic and social resources that are located in a given area, allowing for transformations also in the future' (Adamski/Gorlach 2006: 7). The postulate of 'self-support' expresses the need for multidimensional development strategies in several alternative directions, including the diversification of economies and the maintenance of capital stability. Economic growth cannot be achieved at the expense of social justice and ecological security – the social and environmental dimension. On this principle, development programs must take into account all dimensions of human existence, integrate and balance social and economic goals, while enhancing the quality of the natural environment. Finally, the postulate of 'integration' expresses the need to integrate local (internal) resources with supra-local (external) resources. Sustainable development should be thus based on neo-endogenous development mechanisms (Ray 2006), the essence of which is the

'participation of the interested parties themselves in the formulation and application of development strategies in collaboration with other social actors', both local and external. (Adamski/Gorlach 2006: 9).

For sustainability, 'development ought to be what human communities do to themselves rather that what is done to them by states, bankers, experts, agencies, centralizing planners and others. (…) It is about who has the power and how it is managed. It is about empowerment and self-determination' (Adams 2001: 381, cf. Blewitt 2008: 21). Thus, in sustainable development – in contradiction to the globalisation paradigm – attention is given to the subjectivity of local people and their right to the 'ownership' of progress, which is expressed in the idea of social equity. The sustainable development paradigm re-valorises local knowledge and advocates for the participation of local people (cf. Ray 2006, Adamski/Gorlach 2006). Social equity – as is clearly emphasised in various social concepts – can be achieved only by systematic community participation and strong civil society (Goodland 1995: 3). It is generally believed that participation reinforces social balance and balances the shortcomings resulting from state failure. Strong, self-organised and integrated civil society, on the other hand, ensures the participation of all actors and the integration of all forms of knowledge in the decision-making and defining of the goals of progress, which means that nobody can be excluded from the intended progress. In other words, the sustainable development paradigm and civil society as its indispensable element, imply the integration of all forms of knowledge in the formulation of development programs and their implementation.

It is generally assumed that sustainable development should be based on sustainable communities whose creation and strengthening should be therefore encouraged (Goodland 1995, Lawrence 2005, Wheeler 2004). As Baines states, 'Most people have an environmental horizon which is very local – the end of the street or the top of the next hill. Sustainability has first to make sense at neighbourhood level, if it is ever to reach global proportions' (1995: 14, as cited in Warburton 1998: 16). Thus, sustainable communities are those that embed the idea of sustainable development in the local environment. Local communities constituting 'peaceful centres of established values' (Fu Tuan 1987: 75), respond to 'fundamental human desires' (Nisbet 1973: 91), give individuals 'a sense of auto-realisation and interconnectedness with people sharing particular cultural values' (Starosta 1994: 34), provide a feeling of community, structure and sense (Toffler 1997), build a sense of security and a consciousness of orderliness, and thus favour the activity of individuals who perceive themselves as actors capable of shaping their own environment. Thus, revalorisation of local communities enables a new balance to be established in a world destabilised by globalisation. Under the assumption of sustainable development the role of the local community is, firstly, to balance and integrate the economic, social and environmental components of the local system, and secondly, to meet the needs of present and future generations, all while respecting the rights and efforts of other communities in the region or the world also to achieve sustainability (DEFRA 2006). The task of maintaining sustainability is thus delegated to the local level. These are the 'sustainable communities' and local actors who should have decisive importance in the creation of social development. Development should therefore take place in reliance on local resources and mechanisms but with external support.

A sustainable community can be defined as one based on a melange of endogenous and exogenous resources, capable of sustaining economic development, high-quality services and the abundant social capital needed to maintain a high quality of life for all residents and improve it where it is insufficient. A sustainable community can tackle emerging issues in a creative way and provide future generations with such resources (material and nonmaterial, tangible and imponderables) that enable them to achieve the same or higher standards of living (Hines 2000: 37). Hines lists such sustainable community features as good housing conditions, urban infrastructure, service availability, high-quality educational services including professional development, thriving local economy, diverse fauna and flora, good air, water and soil quality, low energy consumption and low waste production, sustainable lifestyle (less consumption, fewer

unhealthy behaviours, etc.), healthy and safe living environments for residents, high quality of information, lively and creative culture, high level of civic participation, and continuous improvement of the environment (Hines 2000: 38-39).

As Judith Blewitt states, 'the idea of sustainable development is very simple. The point is to make the future world a better and healthier place than it is now' (Blewitt 2008: ix). Such development is not that simple, though. It is met by resistance from those social circles that lose out on sustainability, such as large corporations who pollute the air or national governments who are interested mainly in GDP growth and therefore allow such practices. The idea of sustainability is becoming a matter of political dispute because restoring balance means that one side of the equation, economics, will lose out as a result of this process. Nevertheless, the concept of sustainable development lies at the heart of the development programs of all national governments and supranational political organisations, including the United Nations and the institutions of the European Union. Thus, by becoming a political concept for the pursuit of political goals, it is also often abused. The concept of sustainable development, developed first in technocratic circles, replaced its predecessors because it proposed a fuller and more attractive idea of development. By entering the international political scene, it faces the danger of turning into a mere slogan named 'sustainability', that can help to maintain the dominance of the present order based on the market and the monetary value of goods, nature and people.

Although on the basic assumptions of the sustainable development paradigm, 'economic ambitions are tempered with respect for social equity and environmental integrity, with the economy being forced to take its place as only one of three "elements" in the calculus of sustainable development' (Lawrence 2005:146), in the current literature one can find three different perspectives on relations between the aforementioned elements of sustainability. In the first, the natural environment, economy and equity are still considered three equally significant pillars of the development concept. In the second, a focus on sustainability within the processes of change and transformation means that economic growth will be achieved with no significant destruction to the social tissue and with no destruction of natural resources. Finally, the third approach to development considers environmental protection alone – understood as conservation of existing natural resources – the only criterion of sustainability. Economic and social changes are acceptable only as long as they do not exceed a certain level of depletion of natural resources which are being utilised (Elliot, 2006). Similarly, Levidow (2005: 99), following other researchers, points out three basic perspectives on sustainability, namely: the neo-liberal, the people-centered, as well as the environmental perspective. They are focused on, respectively, sustaining economic growth that does not undermine resources, rebuilding social relations, and protection of natural resources.

Nevertheless, as Lorek, Vasishth and Zoysa (2012) put it, 'Despite all the knowledge and experience gathered since 1992 [Rio Earth Summit - MK] – perhaps even since the publication of Limits to Growth two decades earlier – about the worsening state of the earth's ecosystems and the increasing inequity within and between countries, the global political language and mindset remained resolutely committed to growth. While sustainable development was a shared hope at the 1992 Rio gathering, in June 2012 governments around the world focused on "sustained growth."' Gómez-Baggethun and Naredo (2015) come to a similar conclusion by identifying three significant shifts within the discourse on sustainable development: (1) from a notion of growth versus environmental sustainability, to a notion of growth for environmental sustainability, (2) a shift in focus from direct public regulation and planning, to market-based instruments and liberalisation, and (3) a shift from politics to technocracy. The latter shift seems particularly responsible for the expert-led character of sustainable development in recent years: this is a narrow group of privileged technocrats who decide on the indicators of sustainability of development and thus define the meaning, objectives, agents and methods of sustainable development, significantly limiting the opportunities for bottom-up decision-making, and betraying the concept's original, decades-old ideals (cf. Turcu 2012). Sustainable development seems to be redefined by the neo-liberal

perspective which is regaining dominance in development discourse, making room for various alternatives to sustainable development that have been developed recently, with 'de-growth' theory being the most radical one of these. The question 'whose values count?' in defining sustainable development seems once again contested, and ultimately answered by those with economic power (cf. Anderson, Teisl and Noblet 2016, Chambers 1997).

This should make us aware of that even the most beautiful concepts may turn out to be empty slogans if the dominant rationality overtakes the right of different players to define their essence. Sustainable development, despite its ambitious and praiseworthy assumptions, may then still be an excluding, technocratic concept, remaining distant from the real needs and concerns of people. The participation and involvement of all types of knowledge is therefore indispensable for sustainable development to meet its ideals of social equity and ecology. The lack of a civil society makes the society vulnerable to the domination of market rationality and may thus limit sustainable development to 'sustained growth', where 'growth' takes the more important place in this collocation than 'sustained'. Participation of the whole variety of knowledge in the formulational, decisional and implementational processes of change is therefore critical for sustainable development. There are two basic ideas that determine the opportunities for such participation: civil society and governance.

Civil society and sustainable development

It is generally assumed that there is a direct relation between local civil society and sustainable development. Civil society is considered both a dimension of sustainable development (its aim and indicator), and a facilitator for sustainable development strategies. Following other authors, Grifoni, Guzzo and Ferri (2014) identify three different kinds of benefits of public participation for environmental policy-making, namely: substantive, normative and instrumental benefits. The authors claim that substantive benefits of public participation come from 'encouraging multiple perspectives, [which] leads to better solutions' (2014: 2). Normative benefits consist in 'encouraging learning, both social and individual, [which] enriches both the individual and the society' (ibid). Instrumental benefits are fruits of 'collaborative relationships, [which] assist program implementation, diffuse conflict, increase transparency and social trust' (ibid). In all these cases civil society brings significant benefits to sustainable development.

Nevertheless, the relation between civil society and its benefits for sustainable development does not seem to be clear enough. This is because, first of all, the concept of civil society itself can be ambiguous. Secondly, 'real' civil society diverges from the idea of it and takes on various patterns, not only in different countries but also in different local communities. Finally, the way in which civil society influences sustainable development strategies in practice needs to be explained. It is not my aim here to answer all these questions and doubts. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to study the relation between civil society and sustainable development. Therefore, I examine sustainable development strategies in specific rural civic communities from the cognitive point of view.

The model of civil society to be proposed here was developed in my previous works on civil society and rural civic communities in Poland (Klekotko 2004, Klekotko 2005). It is a wide, systemising approach including all the main threads present in various definitions of civil society and in research done in the Polish context. The main reason for the model is to make both structural and cultural aspects of civil society measurable on the individual level. It should thereby provide a conceptual and methodological tool to measure civil society – which is a 'collective' phenomenon – on the individual level by using the survey method. Instead of the number of NGOs per capita, various behaviours and predispositions of individuals as civil society members are investigated.

The word ‘civility’ describes the aforementioned behaviours and predispositions of individuals as members of civil society (in its normative meaning). I define civility as the subject’s readiness and ability to undertake conscious, full and responsible participation in society, and thereby play a role in determining its stability and development. This description is based upon four pillars: (1) a prodemocratic attitude and civic competency, (2) a productive, subjective and systemic individual orientation, (3) civic activity: both individual and group-based, and (4) civic virtues (cf. Ossowska 1946): responsibility (i.e. responsibility for common life, perfectionist aspirations, consciousness of the bonum comune), virtues of social coexistence (trust, loyalty, solidarity, honesty, tolerance, chivalry, overcoming egocentrism and the ability to restrain oneself, the ability to cooperate, law–abidingness), virtues of mind (open-mindedness, critical thinking, intellectual honesty, self-discipline).

The concept presented here assumes a multiplicity of patterns of civil society adopted in given communities. On two general dimensions – the form of civil activity and the character of social relations – it is possible to identify five basic types of civil society. The first dimension – civil activity – includes a full spectrum of activities and behaviour, but two general forms of civil activity can be identified: individual, and group activity. The individual activity includes: interest in national and local matters, newspaper readership, holding crystallized political views, participating in elections, and religious behaviour. The group activity consists in self-organising and collaborative activity of people of similar interests and views. These groups form at the grassroots, spontaneously and voluntarily, and function independently of the state (Gliński, Palska 1997: 366). Such activity includes both that of different non-governmental organisations (associations and foundations), social participation, and involvement in matters of the neighbourhood and social environment.

The second dimension of civil activity – the character of social relations – helps identify formal (institutional) and informal activities, although the borderline between these two types is very fluid. Generally, formal civic activity includes all institutional actions, in other words: all activity subject to formal regulations, for example: affiliation with organisations in the third sector, or participating in formalised civic actions. Informal civic activity by contrast involves the whole sphere of behaviour outside institutional frames, based on direct relations between people, informal neighbourly intercourse, local traditions of cooperation and mutual help, civic virtues of trust and loyalty, and usually manifests itself in non-institutionalised actions for the sake of whole community.

From both the aforementioned criteria we can identify five basic patterns of local civil society (Klekotko 2005):

- minimal civil society pattern consists in fulfilling civic duties towards the state, such as taking part in elections and taking an interest in public matters, together with a lack of participation in social activity in the public sphere (individual political activity only);
- informal and locally oriented civil society pattern is characterised by strong horizontal ties between individuals, their involvement in local matters and activity for the common sake of the community, taking part in local elections; in its extreme form (locally-oriented civil society) it is characterised by withdrawal from individual political activity on the national scale (by not voting in parliamentary elections or taking an interest in national matters); in both cases, informal relations and ties, including neighbourly ones, and norms of trust, loyalty and cooperation play the most significant role;
- institutional civil society pattern is more likely to be found in big cities where the availability of ‘civic infrastructure’ is wider (with more associations, organizations and civic institutions); it consists in affiliating with organisations and making use of available civic institutions; social relations in this pattern are formalised; there is no informal activity,

especially there are no neighbourly relationships and ties; ties are usually based on similarity of interests;

- ideal civil society pattern consists of citizens participating in society in both formal and informal ways: they are involved in both institutional and informal forms of civic activity, interested in local and national-level public matters, take part in political life (– they are active in all forms and fields of civil society);
- the civil society of apolitical community workers: this consists in significant involvement in group activity in the public sector, but a lack of individual activity (namely, no participation in elections at any level, lack of personal political viewpoints, and no interest in the political life of the community). Although it might seem incorrect to call individuals exhibiting this pattern 'citizens', as they do not fulfill their basic civic duties (or we could say: they do not meet sine qua non conditions for being a citizen), the model may be quite common in totalitarian states or in any unfavourable political context, especially where there is distrust towards state institutions (lack of vertical trust). Such a local civil society does not seem to favour sustainable development, as it is impossible to independently create sustainable programs beyond and potentially against the structures of local and national political power.

Characteristics of the above types are shown graphically in Table 1. Some patterns in the table may be mixed types – peculiar hybrids of basic types. They always have a logic that may be explained by various historical and sociocultural factors. From my research of available literature on local civil society in Poland, I have identified four basic determinants of the patterns taken by local civil society in Poland (cf. my previous work: 2005). The strongest influences on civil society patterns in a given community seem to be: 1-) regional traditions (originating in the historical Russian, Prussian or Austrian Partitions of past centuries); 2-) a locality factor (community cultural integration); 3-) location on the axis 'centre – periphery' (distance from administrative centres); and 4-) cultural capital, including a 'winners-/losers-of-transformation identity' (cf. Klekotko 2006).

Table 1. Types of rural civic communities

Types of civil society (citizens)	Types of civic activity		Forms of activity resulting from type of social relations	
	Individual	Group	Formal	Informal
Minimal civil society	+	-	-	-
Informal civil society*	+	+	-	+
Institutional civil society	+	+	+	-
Ideal civil society	+	+	+	+
Apolitical community workers	-	+	+	+

***** The extreme form of informal civil society is locally oriented civil society. These types differ from each other in a range of individual activities (the locally oriented citizen is active on the local level only).

Source: Klekotko, Marta (2005) Wiejskie społeczeństwo obywatelskie czy wiejskie społeczności obywatelskie? O problemach badania obywatelskości ludności wiejskiej. In Krzysztof Gorlach, Grzegorz Foryś (eds) W obliczu zmiany: wybrane strategie działania mieszkańców polskiej wsi na przełomie wieków. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, pp. 107-120.

Specific types of local civil society create different conditions for different models of sustainable development. They give a voice to different actors, and thus set up the structures for the process of change. It is possible to identify four different types, which depend on the character of civil society actors, of general strategies or models of sustainable development suitable for each type of local civil society: the agency model, alliances model, bottom-up model and integrated model. A minimal civic community creates conditions for the agency model; an institutional civic community – for the alliances model; an informal civic community favours the bottom-up model; and an ideal civic community – the integrated one. Each model is based on the different forms of knowledge that possess the different social actors who are behind the sustainable development programs undertaken in the community.

In the agency model, inhabitants elect local government and entrust it with the community's interests. The activity of inhabitants for local development is limited to electing the appropriate authorities. Local government decides on the direction of changes and then tries to win the inhabitants' support. It is quite common for local authorities to use external expert knowledge in the decision-making process, which is 'filtered' through the local knowledge of the authorities and implemented in the community. Decision-making processes exhibit the top-down pattern, with managerial and expert knowledge dominating, and a minimal share of local knowledge.

In the alliances model, local government cooperates with NGOs which have expert knowledge or represent the interests of definite social groups. These are emphatically what are called 'new' or 'modern' organisations, not the traditional ones which are less formal and deeply rooted in local traditions and – perforce – based on local lay knowledge. Traditional NGOs are more likely to be considered a case of the bottom-up model, while 'new' NGOs are constituted on the basis of similarity of interest, common views or hobbies. Importantly also, they are associations, not the communities which are typical of traditional organisations. In the alliances model, these 'modern' NGOs are deeply involved in the decision-making process and in establishing the directions of change for the community. Local authorities govern the community by building and promoting alliances between local institutional actors; thus expert and managerial knowledge are dominant.

In the bottom-up model local people are encouraged to take ownership of development. Local government cooperates with local people in establishing goals of local policy, and the ideas for development derive from the community. Local people play a significant role and lay knowledge dominates. External expert knowledge may be used in decision-making, if the local people agree. Importantly, the bottom-up model and dominance of lay knowledge may threaten sustainability as well. This is because, first, the content of lay knowledge may be in contradiction to the idea of sustainability. The practice of field-stubble burning, an element of traditional local knowledge, is the best example here. Secondly, the lack of expert knowledge, very common in this model, limits opportunities for sustainable development program in a given community.

Finally, in the integrated model all actors (local government, NGOs, and local people) participate in decision-making processes. The direction of changes is determined in public debate and social consultations. This is a perfect model, where the integration of all forms of knowledge occurs.

Table 2. Models of sustainable development

Models of sustainable development	Actors and forms of knowledge			
	Local government	NGOs	Inhabitants	External experts
	Managerial knowledge	Expert (+managerial)	Lay knowledge	expert /scientific knowledge*
Agency model	+	-	-	+/-
Alliances mode	+	+	-	+/-
Bottom-up model	+	-	+	-/+
Integrated model	+	+	+	+

***** The share of external expert knowledge in the first three models in the table depends on the wish of local actors and it is the least probable in the bottom-up model.
Source: Klekotko, Marta (2008) Społeczeństwo obywatelskie a rozwój zrównoważony wsi. Podejście poznawcze. In Hanna Podedworna and Paweł Ruszkowski (eds) Społeczne aspekty zrównoważonego rozwoju wsi w Polsce. Partycypacja lokalna i kapitał społeczny. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

The idea of sustainable development assumes the cooperation of the holders of different forms of knowledge and the participation of local people in global progress, which can be achieved by civic participation and a strong civil society. Civil society, therefore, is considered the guarantor of equity and sustainable development in the social dimension, and a helpful factor in implementation of sustainable development programs on all dimensions (economic, ecological and social). However, the different types of civil society determine the model of sustainable development and the forms of knowledge that define the directions of changes. Not all types of civil society favour an equal share of all forms of knowledge in the decision-making process. The ideal civil society (ensuring the participation of all forms of knowledge) can nevertheless perform and develop only in certain circumstances, which are to a large extent determined by the system of local political power. To ensure the general participation of all forms of knowledge, governance structures must be present.

Governance and sustainable development

Although governance may have descriptive and normative meanings, usually the latter is most associated with the term. In the normative meaning, governance is considered the ‘good’ and ‘desired’ way of governing, as opposed to government. The ‘government era’ was characterisable by the total domination of a state institution (the government) as the one and only actor eligible and responsible for policy and decision-making. Power was top-down and one-way only, flowing from those who governed (government officials), to those who were governed (society) (Kooiman 2000). By contrast, in the governance model, the government is only one of a whole range of actors involved in the political process; there are many centres of power and it flows in both ways (ibid).

This paradigm shift towards governance was largely due to the failure of aid programs directed at third-world countries by international institutions. Most of these programs have failed because of the weakness or corruption of the political systems of the countries receiving aid. The second source of the crisis of the traditional governing system is the increasing inefficiency of the governments of developed countries in the area of social policy. It is necessary to define the

political conditions conducive to the implementation of aid programs and effective economic development. It is now assumed that there is a close link between the democratic political system and economic development, and that 'real' development is possible only under conditions of participatory governance (Minogue 2002: 122).

Richards and Smith (2002) state that 'Governance is a descriptive label that is used to highlight the changing nature of the policy process in recent decades. In particular, it sensitizes us to the ever-increasing variety of terrains and actors involved in the making of public policy. Thus, governance demands that we consider all the actors and locations beyond "the core executive" involved in the policy making process' (2002: 2, 15). The variety of actors involved in decision-making is therefore the focus of the concept of governance. Kooiman defines governance as 'arrangements in which public as well as private actors aim at solving problems or create societal opportunities and aim at the care for the societal institutions within which these governing activities take place' (2000: 139, 2003). Similarly, Rhodes (1997: 52-53) considers governance a self-organised, interdependent network of public as well as private actors with significant autonomy from state authority (cf. Minogue 2002: 118). Enjolras also draws attention to the pluralism of actors, arguing that the notion of governance designates the whole of the relationships between various public and private actors in the development and implementation of policies aimed at achieving common goals as an expression of the general interest (Enjolras, 2005).

Governance, in other words a partnership in community management, is thus such a system of local political power that allows the sustained cooperation of all social partners (residents, associations, local businesses, etc.) in making community decisions, identifying problems and building programs to resolve them, as well as in creating visions and strategies for local development and their implementation. In the decision-making process, the postulates of all sides are taken into account, because the space of governance is the space of debate and negotiation that results in consensus. Local governments exercise power by creating and promoting alliances between actors, rather than through making top-down decisions typical of the traditional model of community management (cf. Lawrence 2005: 155). Moving away from the linear model, that is, top-down strategy or policy design, the governance model takes a circular form based on feedback, networking, and inclusion, starting from the creation of the strategy to its implementation at all levels (Janikowski 2006: 61). In practice, the governance model is implemented through public consultation, debate, alliances and the lasting cooperation of social partners, and programs counteracting social exclusion.

Because the analysis of governance as a system of exercising power involves both the structural and the processual aspect, while assessing the quality of local governance it is important to look at both the structure of the system and the interactions between its components. The structure of governance should be understood as both the actors in the governance process as well as the institutional framework and formal arrangements defining the terms of co-operation and decision-making in the municipality (such as the charter of cooperation, civic consultations, rules of local government financing, etc.). In other words, it is about defining the components of the system and the relationship between them. Processual assessment of the quality of co-governance is based on the analysis of control mechanisms and the realization of objectives: how these objectives are implemented, whether they are implemented effectively, who actually participates in decisions, etc. The quality of governance, and therefore the wealth of institutional capital, is determined by the pluralism of entities, institutional arrangements conducive to sectoral collaboration, and by what David Stark, Balazs Vedres and Laszlo Bruszt define as the 'domestic integration of the civil sector' (2006).

The first condition for effective governance is undoubtedly the presence of numerous social partners who claim to represent the interests of all social groups, that is, organised civil society. Hence, the first element in the description of local institutional capital is the pluralism of the civil sector entities. The cooperation of partners would then require the adoption of a certain institutional

framework that should allow full civic participation. Because governance means the cooperation of three sectors (state – market – civil society), the presence of non-governmental organisations is not enough, and internal integration of the third sector is also necessary.

Stark, Vedres and Bruszt (2006) identify three dimensions of domestic integration of the civil sector, namely: participation, embeddedness and associativeness. Participation refers to involvement in civic organisations and how it impacts their activity. One can always find organisations whose members are very active and take part in decisions on goals and their implementation, as well as organisations whose members gather just once a year only to vote on approval. The former ones are more likely to represent the interests and values of the community and thus might be described as bottom-up. Embeddedness refers to networks of relations between civic organisations. They are considered 'embedded' if they 'have ties that involve relations of accountability to other domestic civic organizations (…) Civic associations that cooperate with other organizations are more likely to take their values into account and thus to define the public goods represented by them in a more encompassing way' (2006: 328). Moreover, cooperation between civic organisations enables them to exchange knowledge and experience, helping the entire third sector develop. Finally, associativeness refers to the diversity of connections of civic organisations. Apart from cooperation with other NGOs, it is also important to maintain relations with actors from outside the sector: state institutions, research agencies, business, media, etc. Such cooperation is an indispensable element of the governance process. The organisation is considered 'associative' if it collaborates in a project with at least two others belonging to different sectors. The authors conclude that 'whereas participation refers to relations of accountability to an organization's members and volunteers, and while embeddedness refers to relations of accountability to other civic actors, associativeness refers to an organization's collaborative relations with actors outside the civic domain' (2006: 329).

Good governance requires therefore civil society actors on the one hand, and structures and institutional framework that allow full civic participation on the other. Although good governance is believed to assure the participation of all actors, the character of this participation may differ significantly, which has a great impact on the quality of governance, and in the extreme case can lead to a 'tyranny of participation' (cf. Hickey and Mohan 2004). As mentioned, participation and its benefits for sustainable development may be substantial, normative or instrumental. These three kinds of benefits seem related to different stages of the development process as well as to the use or role that is given to civil society actors. Substantive participation consists in participation in all the stages of the development process, starting from the formulation of sustainability goals and programs, through the decision-making process, to project implementation. It has significant and substantial influence on the development process. Normative participation limits the role of knowledge of various actors to consultation and learning. Finally, instrumental participation allows actors' knowledge to be included only in the implementation stage of the development process. In other words, civil society resources are considered facilitators of change implementation and of the dissemination of sustainable strategies, but have no influence on the formulation of sustainability programs, on setting the sustainability goals, or on decision-making. Therefore, three different systems of governance can be identified: inclusive, consultative and instrumental. If substantial participation is assured, inclusive governance can develop. In inclusive governance all types of actors are included in defining, executing and implementing sustainable programs. In consultative and instrumental governance, the role of civil society actors is significantly limited. In consultative governance, civic actors take the role of an 'opinion body' or advisors. They are invited into the decision-making process and are supposed to contribute to the development of a project, but the goals and strategies are previously defined by authorities or experts, so that the use of local knowledge resources may be limited, and real local needs and concerns may remain unaddressed. Finally, instrumental governance uses civil society actors as the agents of change: local knowledge is a kind of 'tool' of the implementation process, but does not in the project design.

Therefore the models of sustainable development differ with the system of local political power. In the agency model, the system exhibits the traditional top-down pattern. In the alliances model, a shift towards partnerships and the governance model can be observed. Some kind of governance, although deficient, exists in the bottom-up model, and the full and mature governance system is characteristic of the integrated model.

Table 3. Types of governance

Types of governance in development	Participation: stage of development process		
	Formulation	Decision-making	Implementation
Inclusive	+	+	+
Consultative	-	+	+/-
Instrumental	-	-	+

Source: author's own work

Obviously, only the inclusive governance system ensures the participation of all actors and considers all forms of knowledge. The closer a system is to inclusive governance, the closer it is to the sustainable development model, which should enable everyone to participate in global progress. Therefore it is of great importance to promote the idea of inclusive governance, that is, such a system of local political power that makes possible the enduring participation of all social partners in community decision-making, the identification of problems and the creation of remedial programs as well as an overall vision of local development. The model is executed through social consultation, public debate, lasting cooperation with social partners, and program to counteract social exclusion. The implementation of the inclusive governance model enables local authorities to stimulate and mobilise local civil society and social partners, and – through that – ensure sustainability.

Governance, civil society and rural sustainable development in Poland

To illustrate the significance of interaction of different types of knowledge in sustainable development, I now provide some examples of sustainable development projects in Poland. The material presented below comes from an as yet unpublished working paper prepared for one of the workshops in the CORASON research project, the full title of which is 'A cognitive approach to rural sustainable development – dynamics of expert and lay knowledge', funded by the 'European Union 6th Framework Programme: Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society.' Its aim was to identify the dynamics of different forms of knowledge and their functioning in the economy and society through case studies of rural development projects oriented towards increasing sustainability in 12 different European countries (Ireland, UK, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Italy, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland). The basic hypothesis of the project was that only in the collaboration of different types of knowledge between cooperating actors can sustainable development have a chance to occur (Gorlach, Adamski and Klekotko 2006). In CORASON various types of projects were analysed, ranging from those designed by state or

regional authorities to informal initiatives undertaken by local people, whereby an account of the discussions, conflicts and cooperation among actors was an essential part of the analysis. The research applied extended case study methodology and used various research methods and techniques, including observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis.

One of the best illustrations of a successful agency model is provided by the Raciechowice 'Selective Waste Collection' project, which was prepared and implemented by local authorities with financial and institutional support from the 'Regional Fund for the Protection of Natural Environment'. It was the result of the personal experience of some local council members who observed a similar initiative in the city of Żywiec and decided to launch the same type of program in Raciechowice. The project was focused on the education of inhabitants with the aim of persuading them to segregate their waste for collection. The council representatives participated in various meetings with local inhabitants, informing them about the initiative and explaining the idea. Pupils in local primary schools as well as in pre-schools were important target groups in this educational phase. The system documentation and a waste-pickup calendar was prepared and disseminated. The Regional Fund for the Protection of Natural Environment granted money to buy plastic bags for [segregated] waste (for a 5-year period), to print the information and pickup calendar for every household in Raciechowice. The program adopted a top-down pattern, with managerial knowledge dominating. Apart from the successful implementation of a selective waste collection program, Raciechowice intended to launch two other ecologically oriented programs: thermal modernisation (replacement of coal-based heating systems that cause heavy air pollution with more environment-friendly oil heating) and the replacement of asbestos roofs with less health-endangering roofing materials). Both of these projects were also top-down projects designed by external experts and launched by local government. Both of them failed due to the economic rationale of lay knowledge, the importance of which had not been properly recognised by the authorities before they decided to launch the program. The thermal modernisation project, though partially subsidised, was paralysed by the rising price of heating oil, while the modernization of roofs failed for the lack of financial resources or [outside] support. Although low-interest loans were offered by the Polish 'Bank for the Protection of the Natural Environment', the program also required private assets which most of the locally involved building owners didn't have.

An example of the alliances model is the 'Transparent Municipality Project' realised in the town of Nowosolna (Lodz region). This program was prepared by the 'Polish-American Freedom Foundation', 'Batory Foundation', 'Gazeta Wyborcza' newspaper, the 'Civil Education Center', the World Bank and the 'Foundation in Support of Local Democracy', and was aimed at the improvement of standards of public life, stimulation of civic activity and counteracting corruption. Local government and local NGOs supported by external experts from the aforementioned organisations implemented the program in the community in two phases. The first part consisted in monthly meetings of the local NGO leaders and local council representatives with external experts who presented the principles of transparent functioning of local government, self-organisation and social cooperation. In the second phase several initiatives were undertaken to put the principles of transparency and social participation into practice. The second phase also included information campaigns addressed to local people. Nevertheless, local people were not involved in the program, neither in the formulation phase, nor in its implementation. The project therefore was drawn up, prepared and implemented by NGOs in close cooperation with local authorities. Local people were considered the 'target', but not participants in the project. Expert knowledge and to some extent managerial knowledge were dominant, whereas local lay knowledge was not at all taken into consideration.

Unfortunately, no example of a bottom-up model can be provided here, as there is no such case in the CORASON evidence. The CORASON project focused on the formalised program or projects undertaken in investigated regions (Malopolska and Lodz regions in Poland), and none of them were the initiatives of local communities (their inhabitants), as is fundamental to the bottom-up

model. This may suggest that informal civic communities in Poland are not able to come up with sustainable projects, or undertake formalised programs for sustainable development. Nevertheless, one may learn about such initiatives from the Polish media. Media reports suggest that it is more common for local people to organise themselves against projects that could, for example, threaten local heritage or assets. Probably the most well-known sustainable projects in Poland formulated in the bottom-up way are the ones in defence of local culture or interests of local people. Unfortunately, in the investigated cases the majority of local inhabitants seemed to be passive and lacked social capital, so that no case of informal civil society could be observed, and thus there is no case of the realisation of the bottom-up model in the Polish CORASON documentation. In any case the bottom-up model of sustainable development is particularly difficult to investigate, as it by and large never reaches a formalised stage, being based instead on practices of local people.

Finally, the integrated model of sustainable development can be illustrated by the project for the restoration of the traditional "Polish Red Cow" breed in the Malopolska region. The Polish Red Cow (PRC) project started in the 1960s as an informal bottom-up initiative of a group of farmers in Malopolska who decided to protect the long tradition of breeding these cows by bringing about a hundred cows from areas where the raising of red cows had been prohibited by the communist government, in order to save the whole breed. The traditional rationale of local lay knowledge of the farmers, supported by the scientific knowledge of experts interested in the creation of an animal 'gene reserve bank', was in conflict with the economic rationale of the communist government which did not recognise the economic advantages of the red cow and aimed to replace it with the 'more efficient' black-white and red-white breeds. The economic advantages of the red cow breed for the more sustainable extensive farming methods were recognised by political actors only four decades later, in 2000, and thus an official project to preserve the Polish red cow was launched. A great variety of actors were included in the creation and implementation of the project, namely: national and regional governments, research institutions, local authorities and farmers, all of whom brought specific knowledge into the process. With all these elements strengthening each other, positive effects resulted for the biodiversity of domestic animals. As Gorlach, Adamski and Klekotko (2006: 198) conclude: '(…) academics and experts used elements of traditional lay knowledge (knowledge from the past, currently forgotten to a large extent) to formulate a strategy for the PRC preservation. The project that is a practical implementation of that strategy is based mainly on scientific and managerial knowledge. Its aim, however, is to influence current local lay knowledge so that it can support the re-introduction of Polish red cows in the area. (…) in the 'circle of knowledge' elements of local lay knowledge are processed by the managerial and scientific knowledge to be then fed back into local lay knowledge.' The aforementioned authors also describe the benefits of the project as the following: 'The re-introduction of the Polish red cow in the area can be regarded as the re-invention of a particular local agricultural tradition. It also helps to prevent soil erosion and promote biotope preservation since it requires extensive grazing. The return of the red cow has also preserved the traditional mountain landscape, of which such cows have been perceived as an important element. The project has strengthened identification of the local area as a traditional 'motherland' for the cow, and helped to re-establish breeding activity among local farmers which was largely abandoned in previous decades (ibid: 196).

The CORASON project data, including examples presented above (research from over a decade ago), generally demonstrate the significant weakness of civil society structures in the investigated communities in Poland. Most of the cases in the project lack civil society actors and thus local lay knowledge is underrepresented in the formulation of sustainability programs and decision-making processes. The lack of integrated civil society is thus partially responsible for the dominance of agency model of sustainable policy, as well as for the failure of many of the projects implemented in the top-down manner.

On the one hand, a significant deficiency in civil society actors is observed, and on the other, governance structures seem underdeveloped and are often limited to consultations in decision-

making, usually required by the EU and central funding institutions, or limited to the implementation of specific projects launched by the authorities. Moreover, many of the sustainable development projects in the investigated communities were 'grasping for opportunities', but not integrated strategies for sustainable development. If the opportunity for funding appears, local councils often decide to join such programs and launch sustainable projects in the community. However, there is no integrated strategy and most of the projects undertaken in the investigated communities are rather incidental. Moreover, no actors from outside the government sector are invited to discuss such a strategy, identify local needs and concerns and define goals of sustainable policy. Thus, no durable, inclusive governance were observed in the investigated communities, although some governance structures were created there for the implementation of sustainability projects. In most of the investigated cases of successful sustainable projects, instrumental governance seemed to be dominant, and examples of inclusive governance like the case of Polish Red Cow Project are exceptional. On the other hand, the cases which lacked any kind of governance solutions were condemned to failure. The two projects undertaken in the same community mentioned above (Raciechowice) may serve as an illustration of the significance of governance structures: the project which took on the top-down agency pattern (dominance of managerial knowledge) and lacked the governance approach turned out to be dramatically unsuccessful, while the project in which consultative and instrumental governance structures were developed, was successful.

The other finding is that values of sustainability and ecological rationale – though often appreciated for their economic advantages and usually prevalent in scientific and managerial knowledge – are largely absent in lay knowledge. In the CORASON data, the economic rationality of local lay knowledge seems to be dominant in the Polish rural context. Local people are usually eager to participate in ecology projects if they can benefit from them directly in the short-term perspective. Such an observation leads us to distinguish two forms of ecology-focused projects, called 'convenient' and 'inconvenient' ecology. As long as the project is economically beneficial, time-efficient, can solve inconveniences or provide new conveniences to individuals, local people show a high level of interest and involvement in the projects. However, if the projects demand additional efforts or expenditures from individuals or cause incommodities, they tend to be rejected by the communities. Economic rationale among local people turns out to be stronger even than their health concerns. Air pollution caused by using rubbish as fuel in households is still a huge problem in Poland, even in communities which have successfully developed free waste selection programs. As Gorlach, Adamski and Klekotko put it: "If environmentally friendly economic activities do not require great investments or actually bring profits (or savings) they are widely accepted by local inhabitants. This might be explained by the difficult economic conditions of the local population. As people struggle to secure income to satisfy their basic needs, even relatively small expenses for ecological benefits can become an obstacle impossible to overcome. The rural community in transition is more concerned with surviving until next month than with long-term gains for the environment. In contrast, scientific and administrative/managerial knowledge has been based on long-term rationality. The idea of protecting the natural environment (the ecological dimension of sustainability) has not yet been fully recognized as a profitable strategy in the system of local/lay knowledge. And even if it was recognized by some inhabitants, the lack of economic resources has still been the key factor in preventing the accomplishment of ecological initiatives. Therefore, the economy seems to be the strongest barrier to the idea of a complex sustainable resource management in the investigated gmina" (2006: 199). The dominance of economic rationality, time- and effort-efficiency criteria, as well as the short-term perspective of local lay knowledge may be endangering the realisation of the ecological dimension of development. This should focus our attention on the problem of the normative aspect of knowledge exchange.

Conclusions

The research in rural Poland for the CORASON project proves that integration of all forms of knowledge favours sustainable development programs and sustainable development itself. In all the cases of rural sustainable development analysed in the project, those programs which considered all actors and all forms of knowledge were successful. On the other hand, most of the programs which omitted specific forms of knowledge encountered difficulties in implementation. As Gorlach, Adamski and Klekotko state, good governance is a condition for sustainable development, as 'It requires intensive interactions, both discussions and conflicts, but resulting in cooperation as a sine qua non of successfully formulated projects. Moreover, bringing various actors together might lead to a more holistic and multidimensional overview of the particular issue under consideration. Therefore, by creating a platform for private and public actors, state, market institutions and social organizations governance seems to be the key to successful implementation of sustainability standards in social life. Moreover, such a platform seems to be exceptionally useful for interchanging and evaluating various types of knowledge brought into play by various collaborating actors' (2006: 190).

One could say that the right model of sustainable development is one that enables decision-makers to make good decisions and create good programs. In other words, it is not important who makes the decisions or creates development programs, if these decisions and programs are good for the community. This view is justified only partially. The best program may turn out to be a failure if it is not managed properly or understood by both its executors and participants. The best idea may founder if not accepted by the local community. The best local initiatives may also fail if they do not meet definite formal conditions or institutional demands. In all cases, the domination by a single form of knowledge and the lack of a governance system threatens sustainability. Different actors possess different forms of knowledge that are not susceptible to being judged as better or worse. That is, forms of knowledge are complementary, and all of them must be taken into consideration in formulating and implementing development programs.

Moreover, with the revalorisation of local communities and local knowledge, social subjectivity is being restored to people, so that everyone can feel they have a chance at making their mark – that they matter as much as everybody else. This seems to be an indispensable element of development in the social dimension. Modern discourse on social development emphasises as never before the need to find a balance between economy and the social well-being of every human being. Expressed still more pointedly, an ever wider circle of researchers argue that social development should above all lead to the emancipation of humanity (see: Sen 2002, Singh 1999, McMichael 2004). The building and strengthening of local civil society and governance structures is therefore a sine qua non condition for sustainable development. Therefore the social dimension of sustainable development, which seems now underrepresented, requires more attention. On the one hand, there is a clear need to promote self-organised, integrated civil society actors, and on the other, to develop inclusive governance structures. To make this possible, it is necessary to empower local people and make them feel that they matter. Therefore, programs focused on community empowerment should be developed. Cultural policy has a great role to play in this, because cultural participation empowers people politically and socially, as various researchers have demonstrated (cf. Klekotko 2012, Mayo 2000).

Simultaneously, the exchange of knowledge (normative participation) should be given more attention, because sustainable development ideals must reach local ground and become a part of local rationality to be successfully implemented. This cannot be, however, a top-down process of communicating and imposing sustainable policies, but a dialog which will identify rationales of various groups involved in the development process, address their real needs, fears and concerns, help avoid potential impediments, and find solutions to bottlenecks in the process of change.

Otherwise, a lack of communication between the different forms of knowledge, and lack of structures that enable such communication, along with a disempowerment of local actors, risk turning the promise of sustainable development into disappointment.

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