

# **PUBLIC-SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP: AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS IN POLAND**

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**Abstract:** The article reflects upon the concept of public-social partnership. Developments within the public sector, in particular shared public management and the aim to initiate civic and civic association activities associated with it, is the background of these considerations. Based on them, partnership is identified as a form of collaboration between the administration and non-government organisations featuring attributes that facilitate reinforcement of competences and performance of public sector operations. It is also connected to the concept of institutional capacity and development of Polish local government units. The primary objective of the article is to assess the functioning of Polish local government units in the area of public-social partnership as well as to analyse its importance to the development of their institutional capacity. The Institutional Development Planning method has been used to accomplish the objective.

**Keywords:** public-social partnership, shared public management, institutional capacity

## **1. Introduction**

The problem of public-social partnership, interpreted as a model of relations between the state and the social sector<sup>1</sup>, has become the subject of extensive literature and research work. It is in line with extensive deliberations on the collaboration between the two sectors as well as developments and modernisation in the area of public management. The search for ways of inclusion of the third sector in the accomplishment of public tasks can also be seen on a practical level. In this content, the analysis primarily focuses on the principles and forms of that collaboration, but it also focuses on the weaknesses and challenges accompanying the process (Makowski, 2011; Pacut, and Pokora, 2015). This study primarily complements the first of the indicated areas of investigations. The most essential question posed by the author is that relating to the scope of implementation of public-social partnerships and its importance

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<sup>1</sup> In the article, the terms social sector, non-governmental organisations and third sector organisations are used interchangeably.

to the development of the institutional capacity of local government units in Poland. The attempt to answer is not the primary goal of the article. Theoretical considerations for its execution have been supplemented with the results of empirical research demonstrating the level of institutional development of Polish local government units (LGU's) in the area of public-social partnership. The article consists of five parts. The first part discusses premises and conditions determining the new framework of collaboration between the local government and non-governmental organisations. Then, the focus was on the problem of public-social partnership as a formula within which the above-mentioned collaboration is carried out. The third part is devoted to the partnership as a element method of institutional development planning (IDP). The fourth part presents the results of the analyses carried out applying the IDP method to local government units in the years 2014-2015. The last, i.e. the fifth part of the article, is a summary.

## **2. Conditions of collaboration between the local government and non-governmental organisations**

### **2.1. Premises for collaboration between the local government and non-governmental organisations**

Focus on the problem of cooperation and inclusion of non-governmental organisations in public sector operations is discussed in the source literature in the context of socio-economic processes relating to both the government and the social sector<sup>2</sup>. With regard to the latter, the argument concerning isomorphication of the sectors and social organisations taking over tasks traditionally assigned to the state and primarily involving provision of public services is quoted especially frequently. At the same time, concepts exposing the value of joint action, of the pursuit of synergy, resulting from combining different resources and competences, are becoming more and more important. Conditions of the functioning of non-governmental organisations are also marked by the endeavours to professionalise, to verify the results of the action, and to assess social impact. Economisation, interpreted as the undertaking of economic activities and participation in the market by means of selling goods and services (Chomiuk, and Starnawska, 2016; Wygnański, 2008), is a clear direction of the changes within the civil sector. It ought to be noted that on the one hand those changes are dictated by the search for long-term development and pursuit of non-governmental organisations' independence from the subsidy system of financing. On the other hand, they derive from recognition of their

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<sup>2</sup> Given the topic of the article and the author's focus on the institutional capacity of LGU's, the section covering conditions of collaboration between the local government and non-governmental organisations primarily discusses developments in the context of the functioning of the public sector. However, the author lists the factors and trends on the part of non-governmental organisations that affect evolution of the relationship between the two sectors.

potential in initiating socially important projects and complementing state deficits in response to social problems and needs. As a result, we can observe a new type of relationships emerging between non-governmental organisations and the administration. S. Mazur characterises them by considering non-governmental organisations as partners that can play an important role in the provision of public services, particularly in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of their provision, and by changing the existing model of financing non-governmental organisations from the subsidy system towards contracting that involves outsourcing of public tasks, but also evaluation of the quality of their implementation (Mazur, 2015b), subject to the fact that those new trends are also a consequence of modernisation processes within the administration which may in general be related to (Szczerki, 2004):

- a) creation of transparent and open structures of the state, involving citizens in governance processes,
- b) ensuring sovereignty while allowing for the interdependence between states which occurs both with regard to political process and the flow of resources,
- c) redefining the rules of social justice in the context of aging societies and increasing expectations as to the scope of the services provided by the state,
- d) maintaining civic order affected by increasing social inequalities and a low level of law enforcement.

In the context of this article, developments on the local government level are especially worth noting. The source literature categorises them in relation to the changes in the political sphere as well as applied methods of managing public affairs (Vetter, and Kersting, 2003, p. 13). The first of the groups is particularly characterised civic involvement in management, while the other is characterised by the pursuit of greater efficiency and effectiveness. This division corresponds to the typology adopted by S. Mazur, in which the first group of reforms is deemed to be the Shared Public Management, while the other group is deemed to be the New Public Management (Mazur, 2015a, p. 16). They are briefly described further on in this article, with the primary description covering the concept of Shared Public Management. This direction highlights solutions serving greater activation and participation of citizens, including social partnerships. In turn, the New Public Management reforms will be indicated due to the breakthrough which accompanied with them within the public sector. Not without significance is also the impulse they have provided to further modernise and transform the administration with a view to a more personal treatment of citizens.

## **2.2. The genesis of reforms and new public government concepts**

Public administration modernisation processes are considered to be underlain by three primary premises: growth of the public sector, economic and political crisis, and a decline of the values typically attributable with to traditional administration (Zawicki, 2011, p. 22-23). The search for more effective solutions regarding state management was also motivated by the changes in the demographic structure, globalisation processes, and the trend towards more

active civic participation in public life and articulation of their needs and expectations addressed at, inter alia, public sector entities (Frączkiewicz-Wronka, 2009, p. 44). The changes were also driven by problems associated with ineffectiveness and overburdened public finances as well as the pursuit of excessive regulation of all the spheres of social and economic life (Bevir, 2011, p. 217).

A. Frączkiewicz-Wronka formulates her objections regarding the functioning of the state with respect to the following issues (Frączkiewicz-Wronka, 2009, p. 27-28; Mazur, 2015a, p. 12-13)<sup>3</sup>:

- government actions and its hierarchical structures being subject to the bureaucracy principle as one ensuring the most effective accomplishment of the objectives of the organization;
- adoption of the organisation management model determined by a set of procedures and rules as well as schematic and repetitive actions;
- excessive dependence on state intervention and the resulting supply of goods and services through a bureaucratic mechanism;
- belief in apoliticism and neutrality of administrative level employees;
- assumption that the interest of an individual and the public interest are the same;

The scale of the phenomena and the irregularity presented in the article results in endeavours to modernise and improve the public sector having been undertaken since the 1970s. Criticism, in particular of excessive regulation of the state operation, the manner of public service provision, with concurrent social pressure on reduction of public spending and maintaining a high level of prosperity, resulted in a search for more flexible solutions allowing for adaptation to changes in society and economy.

### 2.3. New Public Management

One of the first responses to so worded challenges proceeded according to the formula of public administration activity, interpreted as in line with the *New Public Management*, being subject to free market principles. Among others, devolution, improved regulation quality, flexibility and implementation of innovative and entrepreneurial behaviours in the public sector are considered to be the dominant idea thereof (Frączkiewicz-Wronka, 2009, p. 43). Compared to traditional public sector management, the new concept followed the following principles (Białynicki-Birula, Ćwiklicki, Głowacki, and Klich, 2016, p. 36; Osborne, and Gaebler, 1992, p. 43):

- adoption of entrepreneurial attitudes and promotion of competition in the context of public service provision,

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<sup>3</sup> In the source literature, reservations concerning the functioning of the state were also presented by S. Mazur. Among other things, he refers to poor legitimisation, inability to accomplish important social objectives, or inability to prevent public resource piracy by groups of interests.

- focus on outcomes and results as well as evaluation and evaluation of the activities carried out,
- orientation on goals and missions, not on compliance with rules and regulations,
- priority of market mechanisms over bureaucratic mechanisms,
- activation of the public, private and non-governmental sector cooperation in addressing social needs,
- not serving citizens but giving them the opportunity to meet their needs,
- devolution and enabling citizens to be involved in governance.

So designed changes resulted in, inter alia, increased efficiency and re-education of public service provision costs, reduced employment within the public sector, and increased empowerment of citizens. However, in many countries they also brought unintended and negative side effects. In this context, Drechsler (Drechsler, 2009, p. 9-10) mentions a kind of mismatch of practices and tools coming from the private sector to the specifics of the functioning of the state which is determined by, inter alia, attention to the common good and generation of social benefits and values which cannot be expressed in quantifiable measures. Mazur (Mazur, 2015c, p. 39-40) complements the list with the state's weakened ability to solve structural problems, both inside and outside of it, defragmentation which hinders effective management of public actions, and excessive focus on economic and financial issues, with other areas of the functioning of the administration being left out. Based on the so formulated criticism of the New Public Management, new directions and ways of improving the state functioning began to be sought. As Osborne says (Osborne, 2006, p. 377), as a result, the New Public Management was a transitional stage on the road of reforms towards *governance*<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.4. Governance

The new concept of governance is determined by the belief in existing interdependencies between the public, the private and the social. This is highlighted by, among others, Stoker (Stoker, 1998), who points out the emergence of a new style of governance associated with the blurring of the boundaries between sectors. He considers departure from the mechanisms which were only founded on power and authority, and which only accepted order based on coercion and resulting sanctions to be its primary characteristic. On the other hand, he recognises the possibility of accomplishing the objectives set and responding to social and economic challenges through solutions developed by both public and non-public institutions in collaboration with the society (Stoker, 1998, p. 17-18). When defining *governance*, Stoker (Stoker, 1998, p. 18) also pointed out power related interdependencies between the institutions involved in shared activities. In this context, Izdebski (Izdebski, 2007, p. 15-17) emphasises the importance of civil society and public administration subordination to

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<sup>4</sup> This text uses the terms shared public management and *governance* interchangeably.

a society consisting of many actors with different views and interests. Therefore, inclusion of dialogue practices in governance processes and pursuit of consensus is of crucial importance in that respect. Synthetic features of governance are also mentioned by Rhodes (Rhodes, 1996). In his view, it is particularly related to self-organising, inter-organisational networks within which they interact. They aim to exchange resources and coordinate shared objectives based on principles negotiated by network members (Rhodes, 1996, p. 660). In turn (Torfing, 2010), Torfing emphasises the specificity of so formulated governance with regard to implementation of public objectives which becomes possible through expression of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors, acting within the framework of an institutionalised structure (i.e. interdependent ideas, concepts and rules) (Torfing, 2010, p. 98-99). In this context, Hausner highlights importance of the legal and organisational form, of the sense of identity and subjectivity, of the resources held and the context of the action as the criteria determining how individual actors interact within the network, and which eventually determine the quality of governance and the effectiveness of the measures taken within its framework. The concept also encompasses readiness to contribute to social space creation and the resulting responsibility shared by leaders and citizens (Hausner, 2015, p. 24-26).

One of determinants of *governance*, directly related to the aforementioned features of networking, readiness for compromise and dialogue, is also the striving to initiate and maintain civic and civic association activities as well as, in a broader sense, their empowerment in terms of affecting public governance. Thus, the state ceases to participate in the process of governance on an exclusive basis. Quite the opposite, there are more and more frequent interactions within that area between public, private and social actors (Mazur, 2015a, p. 21). What is more, in terms of governance, creation of conditions for and development of mechanisms facilitating exchange of resources and supporting accomplishment of interests of various social groups ought to be considered a specific task of the state authorities (Żabiński, 2015, p. 185). The substantial role of public institutions as initiators of the shared management process has also been indicated by Ansell and Gash (Ansell, and Gash, 2008, p. 544-545). Among other determinants of *governance*, they also identified:

- participation of actors from outside the public sector,
- inclusion of stakeholders not only in the opening but also in the decision-making process,
- adoption of formal rules of operation,
- striving to make opinions through compromise (even if it is not always possible to reach),
- focusing cooperation on two primary areas: public policy (Zawicki, 2014, p. 17)<sup>5</sup> and public management.

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<sup>5</sup> Public policy means a system of actions and regulatory, legal and financial tools by means of which public authorities strive to solve problems of collective importance.

With respect to the foregoing postulates, collective nature of the governance process, interpreted as integration of postulates and visions of various actors in the field of public policies formulated, and those actors sharing responsibility for their results ought to be considered the underlying idea of governance. Its primary element, distinguishing it from other informal networks, is also its structured design which covers and orders stakeholders' joint actions and exchange of resources between them. It also enables relation management, inclusive of influencing trends shown by individual actors (Zawicki, 2014, p. 546).

The formula of governing, developed based on the *governance* paradigm, appears to play an important role in terms of the local administration. Its operations and execution of tasks are carried out in direct relation to local communities, their problems and needs, meaning in the context in which the pursuit of interoperability and integration of a variety of capitals to improve the quality of life is particularly justified. Moreover, the source literature emphasises that local government interest in the governance idea results from the search for innovative tools to develop local economy, allowing for the important role of enterprises in fostering the capacity and economic activity, and enabling their inclusion in decision-making processes. Also, the scale and complexity of social and economic problems which local authorities need to face further support application of *governance* solutions. In combination with increasing expectations as to the quality of public services, this creates a need for activities involving diverse resources held by diverse social actors (Peter, 2001, p. 11-13). Given the decreasing confidence in administrative actions and the administration's weakened legitimacy, treating a citizen not only as a voter, but also as a stakeholder, is becoming a need of local governments (Hausner, 2008), subject to the fact that the category is not only related to individual citizens, but also to any forms of their representation, i.e. NGOs, informal social movements, entrepreneurs, media, or public institutions (Löffler, 2005, p. 170).

Some authors define the foregoing change (John, 2001) as transition from the *local government* to the *local governance*, which has been summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*Comparison of the concept of the local government and the local governance*

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Local government</b>	<b>Local governance</b>
Number of institutions in the process of governance	few	many
Structure of the administration	hierarchical, consolidated	decentralized, fragmentarised
Horizontal networks of cooperation	closed nature	significantly expanded
Scarce	international network	significantly expanded
Forms of legitimisation	elections	elections and new forms of legitimisation
Public policies	routine	innovative, created based on the mechanism of organisational learning
Role of the government	direct control	decentralisation, minor interventions
Leadership	collective	charismatic

Source: John P.: *Local Governance in Western Europe*. Sage, London 2001, p. 17.

Consequently, the role of the local government in the execution of public functions is more and more frequently related to the management of the process of service provision, not direct service provision to citizens, assuming that its goal is to develop the local community (Swianiewicz, 2005, p. 16). One might assume the following principles, also defined as good governance, are the key determinants of the foregoing action model (European Commission, 2001, p. 8): openness, participation, accountability, efficiency and coherence. Based on it, the article provides for the key term of public-social partnership, in this context interpreted as a participation mechanism setting objectives for the public administration and ways of accomplishing them (Wygnański, 2012, p. 13).

### **3. Public-social partnership**

#### **3.1. Public-social partnership: definition**

When detailing the foregoing concept of partnership, it is worth pointing out a few essential impulses that have decided its recognition and dissemination, both in terms of scientific research and practice. In that respect, the observation of the growing complexity of social problems issues which cannot be solved by the state, the market, or the civil society (Swianiewicz, 2011, p. 24) appear to be of particular importance. This is highlighted by Frąckiewicz-Wronka and Bratnicki (Frąckiewicz-Wronka, and Bratnicki, 2013, p. 393), according to whom partnership is a new organisational project within the public sector, created in response to the challenge of public service provision in an economy changing under the influence of such phenomena as globalisation, development of new technologies, or knowledge-based economy. The resulting need for interoperability between sectors is also confirmed by the arguments referring to the rationalisation and improvement of state expenditures, effectiveness in accomplishing public policy objectives, and increasing the scale of individual benefits to the users of public services (Adamiak J., Czupik M., Ignasiak-Szulc, 2013, p. 23; Lowndes, and Skelcher, 1998, p. 313; Frąckiewicz-Wronka, and Bratnicki, 2013, p. 368). Emergence of partnership as a formula of public sector activity is also a practical expression of the trend in the public sector, described in the first part of the article, which involves networking, programming and implementation of projects with the use of a variety of coordination mechanisms: hierarchical, market and social mechanisms (Jones, Hesterly, and Borgatti, 1997). It became one of those ideas recognised on the European Union forum as referring directly to the idea of integration and cooperation which constitute its foundation. In this context, it is defined in two ways: as an idea popularising cooperation on different levels of governance: European, national, regional, and local (vertical approach), and as a concept referring to interoperability between different groups representing the public,



the private, and the social sector (horizontal approach) (Benington, and Geddes, 2013, p. 2). On the other hand, Swianiewicz (Swianiewicz, 2011, p. 22) stresses that it is but owing to popularisation on the European forum that partnership marked its distinct presence in the manner of implementation of the policy by the individual Member States. Among other countries, it was also the case in Poland, where this idea has been primarily developed in the form of partnerships established within the framework of programmes co-financed by the European Union. It was also regulated in the legislation, inter alia, in the act on public benefit activities and volunteering, the act on carrying out of the development policy, and the act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions. At present, partnership is also seen in the context of the reform of the public administration, taking into account elements of governance, which is reflected in, inter alia, such documents as the 'National Development Strategy 2030' and the 'National Development Strategy 2020', in which participation and interoperability between different sectors are some of the important conditions for the modernisation of the public sector.

On addressing the issue of social public partnership it is useful to note various ways of how it is recognised and analysed in the subject literature. In this regard, each of the authors recalls especially the examples of cooperation between the public and non-government sectors in areas such as education, health, health care, employment, social cohesion, sustainable development or within the broader context the examples of improving the quality of public services or introducing innovative solutions in this regard (Brinkerhoff, 2003; Deserti, and Rizzo, 2014). The discussed issues also include the ones relating to the nature of connections and relationships that occur in the partnership as well as determinants which impact the achievement of the intended results (Brinkerhoff, 2002).

The examples of approaches to public-social partnership presented by Polish authors are also interesting. Their list has been contained in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*Public-social partnership according to Polish authors – examples of recognition*

<b>Publications</b>	<b>The presented recognition</b>
Frączkiewicz-Wronka A., Tkacz M. and Arando S.: The Business Model of a Public Social Partnership: Contextual Determinants, [in:] Lewandowski M., Kozuch B., (eds.) Public Sector Entrepreneurship and the Integration of Innovative Business Models. IGI Global, Hershey PA, USA, 2017.	the manner to generate public/social value. The model of activity integrating social partners in the decision-making process in the public sphere.
Nitecki S.: Udział podmiotów niepublicznych w realizacji zadań pomocy społecznej, 'Roczniki Administracji i Prawa', no. 12, 2012 Tkaczuk, M.: Partnerstwo publiczno-społeczne jako etap ewolucji podmiotów polityki społecznej w Polsce, 'Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, Sectio H. Oeconomia', no. 42, 2008.	the form for activity to implement the tasks and objectives of social policy in Poland. the element of the provision of social services system, including the tasks of social welfare.
Herbst J.: O kategorii „responsywności” władzy i o pewnym warunku responsywności władzy w Polsce, 'Zarządzanie Publiczne', no. 4(6), 2008.	one of the basic conditions of a responsive state.

Broda-Wysocki P.: Analiza efektywności współdziałania państwa i organizacji pozarządowych w zwalczaniu ubóstwa i wykluczenia społecznego, 'Polityka Społeczna', no. 11-12, 2006.	the tool to prevent social exclusion and poverty.
Przygocki Z. (red.): EkoMiasto. Zarządzanie. Zrównoważony, inteligentny i partycypacyjny rozwój miasta. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2016. Płoszaj A.: Współpraca międzysektorowa a wybrane problemy polskich miast, [w:] Borkowska A., Zielińska E. (red.): Układ otwarty. Miejskie partnerstwa międzysektorowe. ResPublica, Warszawa 2014.	the tool to develop local community. The tool for the participatory management of urban development and solution of urban problems.
Frączkiewicz-Wronka A., Austen A.: Menedżerowie w organizacjach publicznych – w kierunku zwiększania zatrudnialności, 'Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi', no. 3-4, 2015.	the formula to develop the competences of manager in the public sector
Jagoda A., Prudzienica M.: Partnerstwo publiczno-społeczne na przykładzie współpracy organizacji pozarządowych z instytucjami rynku pracy - studium przypadku, 'Management', vol. 16, No. 1, 2012.	the manner of cooperation between non-government organisations and the labour market institutions.
Kochańska E.: Wielokryterialna analiza rozwoju innowacji społecznych w kontekście współpracy nauki i gospodarki, 'Acta Innovations', no.2, 2012.	the catalyst of social innovation.
Wronka M.: Analyzing the Success of Social Enterprises – Critical Success Factors Perspective, "Management Knowledge and Learning", conference paper, 2013. Handzlik A., Głowacki J. (red.): Partnerstwo – współpraca międzysektorowa w realizacji celów społecznych. Małopolska Szkoła Administracji Publicznej Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie, Kraków 2012.	the tool to develop social economy the factor of social enterprise success

Source: own elaboration based on the subject literature.

In conclusion, it may be said that the idea of public-social partnership affects different spheres of socio-economic reality. On one hand, it covers the entire spectrum of bottom-up initiatives, reflecting the desire for integration, development, social inclusion. On the other hand, it is the structure and form of planning of cross-organisational activities, which participate in the processes of public shared management. Each time, however, it is the matter of willingness of public authorities to acknowledge the roles of social partners in shaping the public policy and to enable them the real participation in the process (Boyd, 2002, p. 4).

This key observation is reflected in many definitions of public-social partnership. Benington and Geddes are among others, who refer to it, presenting the partnership as a formal organisational structure, which is established to determine the directions of particular public policies and their implementation. At the same time, they recognise its determinants to include (Benington, and Geddes, 2013, p. 3):

- mobilisation of different interest groups and encouragement of the involvement of various partners,
- common and multidimensional programme of action,
- potential to prevent such problems as unemployment, poverty, social exclusion and actions in favour of social inclusion and cohesion.

In another approach, partnership is seen as a formula for cooperation, with clearly defined roles of the organisations that constitute it, established to address and solve specific problems and challenges (Barczyk, 2010, p. 225). In turn, according to Brinkerhoff, it is 'a dynamic relationship between various actors, based on agreed purposes pursued in accordance with a division of labour adopted in relation to the resources held by individual partners

(Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 21). So interpreted partnership is constituted around two axes, designated by the relationship of reciprocity and organisational identity, with the former meaning, *inter alia*, partners' right to equally maximise their benefits. It also refers to the interdependency between them, the resulting responsibility for the accomplishment of shared objectives, to mutual trust and respect. On the other hand, organisational identity is defined through the prism of mission and values of individual actors constituting partnership, but also through the ability to maintain those characteristics, in particular comparative advantages arising from the specifics of their operations. In terms of the foregoing characteristics and the level of their intensity, the following four types of partnership may be identified (Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 22-23):

- a) proper partnership, determined by a high level of reciprocity and identity represented by each organisation;
- b) contracting, characterised by preserved institutional individuality of partners, with a concurrent low level of reciprocity and limited involvement of some of them in the decision-making process;
- c) expansion, meaning dominance of one of the partners, whose values and principles are imposed upon other organisations with low levels of their own identity.
- d) cooptation and gradual absorption, determined by the shared objective on the one hand, and concurrent disappearance of the organisational identity of some of the partners on the other hand<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, the concept of partnership is used to describe different phenomena and relationships between organisations. However, it is worth noting that its essential nature is manifested with the synergy effect accomplished through cooperation between organisations of differing resources and skills, pursuing shared objectives, which could not be accomplished if separated from their collaboration (Mackintosh, 1992, p. 210). In the Polish source literature, the concept of partnership is explained by Frączkiewicz-Wronka and Bratnicki (Frączkiewicz-Wronka, and Bratnicki, 2013, p. 416-417). They put it among network organisations which combine the capacity of the public sector and the social sector, and which coordinate efforts aimed at improving the quality of life of the local community.

In addition to the definitions presented hereinabove, one ought to further indicate four groups of factors influencing formation of partnerships (Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 6):

- a) increasing effectiveness and improving efficiency of the actions undertaken by taking into account comparative advantages of individual partners and division of labour between them,
- b) providing solutions addressing complex social problems through involvement of numerous actors with different capacities and manners of operation (in particular,

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<sup>6</sup> In Polish studies, different types of partnership have been identified by, *inter alia*, (Sobolewski, 2007) and (Barańska, Eichner, Hus, Majewski, and Tomeczek, 2011). In that respect, they distinguished: network, coordinating partnership (strategic team for local development, acting on a long-term and wide-range basis), and executive (project) partnership.

it is about filling the gap related to individual organisations' inability to respond to contemporary problems),

- c) striving to develop solutions beneficial to all the actors involved in joint actions (in this context, partnership is, *inter alia*, a response to problems arising from collective action),
- d) involving a wider group of actors in the decision-making process.

So formulated motives for the formation of partnerships seem reflect benefits and advantages of this form of action at the same time. It appears that in this area they are also in line with needs and expectations concerning the reform of the public administration which have been mentioned in the first part of the article, and in line with the demands associated with good governance. J. Brinkerhoff, who has already been quoted in this article, also analyses partnership in relation to such aspects of *governance* as efficiency, legitimisation, and allowing for contradictory interests. She justifies appropriateness of implementation of such a model of governance with arguments related to, *inter alia*, reduction of external costs, addressing the problem of information asymmetry, building social capital, or stimulating greater identification with the common good than with particular interests (Brinkerhoff, 2007, p. 68-83).

### **3.2. Public-social partnership in the institutional development method**

Using the findings concerning the main characteristics of partnership, and in particular its attributes which are in line with in the concept of shared public management, one may indicate its usefulness in the context of developing institutional capacity of the public administration.

Based on S. Mazur's opinion (Mazur, 2004, p. 59), it is assumed that the latter is determined by:

- ability to carry out strategic governance,
- organisational structures and operational procedures used to accomplish strategic objectives,
- efficient mechanisms to manage human resources,
- provision of public services based on adequate standards and evaluation of costs,
- efficient system of communication with the local community and mechanisms involving it in addressing local problems,
- ability to create framework and conditions to support local entrepreneurship,
- transparent operating procedures.

In general, it may be assumed that in the context of the public sector actors institutional capacity means so the ability to govern. Lynn et al. (Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill, 2000, p. 237) detail the concept, adding that it means the ability to translate *governance* solutions that pertain to, *inter alia*, implementation of individual public policies, into actual actions.

Other researchers are of the opinion that the institutional capacity of the public administration is proven by the ability to efficiently respond to arising changes, to efficiently make decisions, and to manage arising conflicts (Bowman, and Kearney, 1988, p. 346). The concept of public-social partnership which – as a mechanism founded on the basis of cooperation between various actors and their resources – reinforces competences and efficiency of the administration in the provision of high quality services and improves its ability to integrate citizens and involve them in decision-making processes corresponds with this line of thinking. In this sense, it is also an important element on the way of institutional development which in one of the concepts is defined as improvement of the functioning of the organisation aimed at an ever better use of possibilities provided by the existing institutional order (environment) (Zawicki, 2004, p. 112).

The foregoing public-social partnership presentation perspective is also reflected in the Institutional Development Planning (IDP) method<sup>7</sup> which comprehensively covers the problem of improvement of the quality of public administration operations, in particular those carried out by local government units: communes and districts. On the one hand, it is aimed at analysing the public administration institutional capacity, on the other hand – at developing master solutions to be used to improve it. Thus, the IDP method covers the following sequence of actions (Bober, 2015, p. 12):

- diagnosis of the level of development in the form of an institutional analysis,
- development of an institutional development plan, including identification and planning of activities to improve the functioning of local government units,
- implementation and evaluation of implementation of management improvements.

In the light of this article, the first stage is the most important, as it is within its framework that the actions carried out by local government units and existing organisational structures and procedures proving the institutional capacity held are assessed. The foregoing evaluation is carried out within the management areas and criteria which have collectively been shown in Table 3. One of them is partnership, including public-social partnership.

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<sup>7</sup> The institutional development planning (IDP) method was developed by the Małopolska School of Public Administration of the Krakow University of Economics upon request of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, and further developed and modified within the framework of projects co-financed by the European Union. Detailed information on the IDP method can be found at: [www.pri.msap.pl](http://www.pri.msap.pl).

**Table 3.***Public-social partnership in the Institutional Development Planning method<sup>8</sup>*

Governance area	Criteria
Leadership and strategy	1. Leadership 2. Strategic governance
Resource and process management	3. Finance management 4. Property management 5. Space management 6. IT management 7. Process management
	8. Project management
Organisation human capital management	9. Employment planning, recruitment and selection 10. Motivation, evaluation and promotion 11. Professional development 12. Ethics
<b>Partnership</b>	13. Social communication and <b>public-social partnership</b> 14. Public-public partnership 15. Cooperation with entrepreneurs and public-private partnerships
Public service management	16. Administrative services 17. Social services 18. Technical services 19. Economic development support

Source: (Bober, 2015, p. 13).

As presented in the IDP method, public-social partnership is interpreted as a *'model of the relationship between the state and the social sector, in which citizens and their organisations are actively involved in the process of shared network management as a partner for public actors, with the relationships between the network actors being based on acceptance, mutual respect and parties' will to cooperate. This model is used to shape civic attitudes, to create civil society institutions, and to promote civil dialogue and social participation, and – consequently – citizens' active participation in public life'* (Bober, 2015, p. 94). It is worth noting the first version of the method which dates back to 2002 covered public-social partnership in a less distinct and explicit manner. Issues related to cooperation with social organisations and citizens involvement in decisions regarding important problems of the community were, in fact, detailed criteria for local government activities carried out under the banner of broadly interpreted social participation. The change, which took place in this respect, it should be identifying particular aspirations for reforming the Administration and the progress in the field of management of public affairs.

From the perspective of evaluation of the Poland's local government units' capacity in the area of public-social partnership, further reference to the general logic of the IDP method,

<sup>8</sup> The table shows a summary of commune management areas and criteria. The area shown as partnership, including public-social partnership, was likewise included in the version of the method used in the self-evaluation of districts and cities with district rights, so in their case the set of criteria has not been cited. However, the author notes that in the case of such areas as resource management or public service management, there are differences between individual levels of the local government. Detailed criteria for the evaluation of local government units in each case require reference to publications covering institutional analysis of the commune and the district, respectively, which are available at [www.msap.pl](http://www.msap.pl) or [www.pri.msap.pl](http://www.pri.msap.pl).

adopting a five-stage scale of institutional development, is also important. Stage 1 means that a commune or a district undertakes actions provided for in applicable laws. Stage 5, on the other hand, is characterised by the application of non-obligatory solutions, performance of their application result evaluation, and implementation of governance improving solutions. Table 4 shows the stages of institutional development for the criterion relating to social communication and public-social partnership. One of their important feature is their cumulateness, which in practice means that transition to higher levels means fulfilment of the conditions identified at lower levels in the first place.

**Table 4.**

*Stages of institutional development within the 'Social communication and public-social partnership' criterion*

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
1a) The commune carries out social communication and public-social partnership (PSP) activities in accordance with the requirements set in generally applicable laws.	<p>2 a) The commune has set the rules for communication with external actors, including the media.</p> <p>2 b) The commune makes public information which it is not obligated to publicise (for instance information about current affairs, plans and intentions, progress of investment execution, results of actions undertaken).</p> <p>2 c) The commune improves the quality of its information policy through implementation of at least three of the following:</p> <p>a) improvement of the existing and implementation of new communication channels (traditional and electronic, for instance the BIP (Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej),</p>	<p>3 a) The commune collects opinions from residents, commune auxiliary units, non-governmental organisations, social organisations and other groups on matters relevant to the commune, which it is not obligated to collect, as well as opinions regarding the quality of the information policy carried out.</p> <p>3 b) The commune developed and updates a map of activities carried out by non-governmental and social organisations operating within the commune, covering:</p> <p>a) a list of such organisations;</p> <p>b) the type and scope of organisation operations.</p>	<p>4 a) The commune carries out public consultation among residents, commune auxiliary units, non-governmental organisations, social organisations and other groups regarding matters in the case of which consultations are not obligatory, and:</p> <p>a) it applies a transparent consultation model;</p> <p>b) communicates consultation results;</p> <p>c) allows for consultation results when making decisions.</p> <p>4 b) The commune appoints working groups composed of representatives of the public administration, non-governmental organisations, social organisations and other groups to develop joint undertakings.</p>	<p>5 a) The commune appoints bodies comprising representatives of non-governmental organisations, opinion bodies, social organisations and other groups, the scopes of activities of which are consistent with the commune's priority problems.</p> <p>5 b) The commune carries out joint undertakings in collaboration with non-governmental organisations, social organisations, and other groups to solve the commune's priority problems.</p> <p>5 c) The commune regularly evaluates its social communication and public-social partnership related activities as well as all the tools and procedures used in that area, and evaluation results are used to improve PSP mechanisms.</p>

	Public Information Bulletin), newsletters, social networks); b) improvement of information clarity and transparency); c) optimisation of communication frequency; d) allowing for modernisation related demands reported by interested parties.	3 c) The commune supports civic initiatives through at least one of the following forms: a) co-funding of projects b) direct procurement; c) organisational assistance. 3 d) The commune analyses PSP project practicability and carries out activities regarding risk management in that area.	4 c) The commune implements PSP projects within at least two areas of public competence. 4 d) The commune regularly evaluates results of its actions in the area of social communication and PSP as well as all the tools and procedures used in that respect.	5 d) The commune continues to improve its social communication and PSP related activities through: a) systematic comparisons of organisational solutions and outcomes of its operations to accomplishments of other local government units; b) adaptation and implementation of solutions used by the best local government units.
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Source: (Bober, 2015, p. 97).

Description of the model status is yet another important element of individual governance criteria subject to evaluation within the framework of the IDP method. With respect to social communication and -public-social partnership, it is defined as follows: *'the commune informs the public about all the matters of importance to the local community through communication with external actors (for example, the media), using transparent rules which ensure treatment in terms of access to information. Prior to making important decisions, the commune also consults local communities or carries out public consultations on matters which it is not obligated to consult under the law. The commune stimulates local social development, developing a map of social activity and financially, materially or organisationally supporting civic initiatives. The commune initiates formation of working groups which are the platform for joint undertakings by the local government and civic groups. Together with third sector actors, the commune participates in the implementation of activities aimed at solving problems of importance to the commune, applying the public-social partnership formula to it. In order to solve particularly difficult and complex problems, opining bodies are appointed. All the activities that the commune undertakes in the area of social communication and public-social partnership are subject to evaluation, and conclusions from the evaluation are used to improve the commune's policy as well as tools and procedures applied within its framework. The commune uses benchmarking methods, which is manifested in the search for the best solutions in the field of social communication and public-social partnership, and intelligent adaptation of them to the needs and possibilities of the commune'* (Bober, 2015, p. 94).

In the light of the above, the essence of the IDP method may first of all be defined in terms of self-evaluation associated with determining the stage of development of local government units in a specific area. Secondly, it ought to be sought in the planning of changes



which will enable the authority to transition to a higher level of development, and then to implement the said changes.

#### **4. Analysis of the level of institutional development of local government units in the field of public-social partnerships.**

Results of the evaluation of the functioning of local government units in the area of public-social partnership, presented in this part of the article, were collected with the application of the institutional development planning method during the period from December 2014 to September 2015<sup>9</sup> They cover a group of 32 communes and 17 districts located throughout Poland. Information on the stage of development of individual LGU's is related to social communication and public-social partnership, as these areas were collectively covered by the IDP method. However, a detailed analysis only covered the indicators which are related to public-social partnership and social consultations, an advanced form of which is co-decision, and which are an important component of partnership provided for in the institutional development planning method. The research was carried out in the form of self-evaluation by individual units. So obtained data reflect local governments' point of view and their opinion on the application of the public-social partnership model to the execution of tasks assigned to them.

Application of the IDP method to the group of local governments examined makes it possible to claim most of them are on a low level of institutional development within the area examined. This is confirmed by the data according to which nine units were at the first stage of development, which limits activities within the foregoing scope to those stipulated in legislation. In turn, within the analysed social communication and public-social partnership, 16 organisations were at the second stage of development. This means that they are characterised by formulated directions of communication with external entities as well as improvement of the information policy carried out. At the same time, however, they partially meet the conditions of the next stages that are related to the promotion of civic initiatives and analysing the feasibility of public service implementation in the public-social partnership formula (confirmation of fulfilment of the second condition was recorded in the case of 3 communes and 1 district). Similar actions can be observed within a group of 11 local government units at the third stage of development. All of them review their activities with respect to inclusion of other sectors' representatives in their execution. Irrespective of that, they provide assistance to active citizens and their associations, which most frequently takes

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<sup>9</sup> Institutional analyses of communes and districts were carried out within the framework of the project called 'System support for LGU management processes', co-financed by the European Social Fund within the framework of the Human Capital Operational Programme.

the form of organisational support. Consolidated results of the self-evaluation within the social communication and public-social partnership area have been shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

*Stages of institutional development within the social communication and public-social partnership area*

Stage of development	Number of communes	Number of districts
Stage 1	8	1
Stage 2	6	10
Stage 3	9	2
Stage 4	2	0
Stage 5	7	4

Source: own study based on research results.

In the context of the subject matter of this article, a more detailed insight into the local governments that were at the 4th and the 5th stage of development appears particularly interesting, as in their case one may refer to implementation of the public-social partnership model and extended communication with residents and non-governmental organisations according to the concept adopted within the framework of the IDP method, primarily highlighting participation of a wide range of actors in the local community governance process. Nonetheless, also units at lower stages of institutional development more and more frequently include elements associated with such a style of management in the scope of their activities. In view of the above, for the purpose of a further analysis, I shall verify the self-evaluation all those local governments in the case of which implementation of the indicators assigned to stages 4 and 5 in the area of communication and public-social partnership has been observed. Among them, the most important ones are: 1) appointment of opining bodies composed of representatives of non-governmental organisations, social organisations and other groups to develop common solutions to local problems, and then to implement them; 2) implementation of social-public partnership in the sphere of public tasks; 3) evaluation and improvement of the activities of the entity in the foregoing area. With respect to the first criterion, 17 communes and 8 districts declared fulfilment thereof. Apart from appointing bodies advising on priority problems, in all the 8 communes the conceptual phase has also taken the form of joint undertakings aimed at addressing the foregoing issues. In turn, the group of communes which undertake joint actions comprise 23 units, which is a greater number than the number of communes appointing opining bodies.

In response to a question about the use of the public-social partnership formula to implement tasks in at least two areas belonging to the realm of public tasks, a positive response was provided by a total of 29 entities studied, including 20 communes and 9 districts. A summary, reflecting the meeting by local government units participating in the study of the individual criteria for the inclusion of the public-social partnership model in the activities carried out have been shown in table 6.

**Table 6.**  
*Public-social partnership activities*

<b>Actions undertaken</b>	<b>Number of communes</b>	<b>Number of districts</b>
Commune / district analyses possibilities regarding public task implementation in the public-social partnership formula and carries out activities regarding risk management within the area.	24	7
Commune / district carries out public consultation among residents, commune auxiliary units, non-governmental organisations, social organisations and other groups regarding matters in the case of which consultations are not obligatory, and:		
a. applies a transparent consultation model;	22	9
b. informs about the results of the consultation;	21	9
c. allows for consultation results when making decisions.;	20	9
Commune / district appoints working groups composed of representatives of the public administration, non-governmental organisations, social organisations and other groups to develop joint undertakings.	21	9
Commune / District implements tasks in the public-social partnership formula in at least two areas falling within the scope of public tasks	20	9
There is a regular evaluation of the effects of social communication and public-social partnership related activities carried out as well as of all the tools and the procedures used in that area.	16	5
Commune / District appoints bodies comprising representatives of non-governmental organisations, social organisations and other groups, the scopes of activities of which are consistent with the unit's priority problems.	17	8
Commune / District implements joint undertakings in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, social organisations and other groups to solve commune's priority problems.	23	8
There is a regular evaluation of social communication and public-social partnership related activities as well as all the tools and procedures used in that area, and evaluation results are used to improve PSP mechanisms.	9	5
Commune / District continuously improves activities in the field of social communication and public-social partnership by means of:		
a. systematic comparisons of organisational solutions and outcomes of its operations to accomplishments of other local government units;	17	7
b. adaptation and implementation of solutions used by the best LGU's	18	9

Source: own study based on research results.

A high level of local governments' declarations regarding consideration of public-social partnership as a potential way of accomplishing public tasks appears to be characteristic of the data shown in Table 6. 31 units confirmed implementation of such tasks. The tendency to appoint working groups consisting of representatives of different groups with a view to developing joint undertakings and carrying out public consultations on matters which are not mandatory, in particular reported by communes, ought to be viewed positively as well. However, omission of actions associated with improvement of the practices pursued and the tools used appears to be symptomatic in the case of most units. Within the commune group, only nine of them declared that they carried out regular evaluations of their own social communication and public-social partnership related activities to improve the solutions applied. In the case of districts, the level was 5 in 17 units.

Analysis of the results of the self-evaluation carried out by the local governments surveyed also makes one look into the generally low level of self-evaluation in the area of

social communication and public-social partnership, with a high level of compliance with level 4 and level 5 indicators directly regarding public-social partnership. It appears that many of them use higher level tools while neglecting issues regarding formation of a transparent information policy, improvement of the existing and implementation of new information channels. A more thorough insight into the problem of implementation of local government units and non-governmental organisations' joint undertakings, carried out in the form of additional questions addressed at the local government self-evaluation team, also reveals that the foregoing cooperation is typically carried out in the form of outsourcing public tasks to social partners. Consequently, in this content one may refer to some survey participants misunderstanding the idea of public-social partnership.

In the context of the institutional analysis carried out in the field of public-social partnership, one ought also to note that the local governments surveyed hardly tend to develop the area of their operations which entails residents and non-governmental organisations' involvement in the initiatives planned and undertaken. Within the commune group, only 8 out of 12 units declared willingness to develop and transition to a higher stage in that respect. In the case of districts, there were only two such units. At the same time, no local government followed up and decided to undertake any action for improvement.

## 5. Conclusions

The article attempts to systematise our knowledge of public-social partnership interpreted as inclusion of social actors in the public sector operations. Thus, the study covered different approaches defining the idea of the partnership and, within the framework of the phenomenon, identifying different relationships between non-governmental organisations and the public administration. Also, it noted conditions for popularisation of the idea and its connection to the changes arising within the public sector. In this context, the article especially highlights the attempts to initiate and maintain civic activity developed within the *governance* framework. Considering this perspective as the starting point, the article analyses Poland's local government units' tendency towards the use of mechanisms facilitating accomplishment of the interests of various social groups, public-social partnership in particular. At the same time, the problem is presented in the local government unit institutional capacity development perspective. Data obtained as a result of institutional analyses carried out during the period from December 2014 to September 2015 within a group of 32 communes and 17 districts only confirm that the local government units participating in the survey undertake actions fostering citizens' participation in public life. Noteworthy is the fact that most of the units analyse the possibility of applying this public-social partnership formula to implementation of public tasks. At the same time, however, it turns out that the

more advanced the forms engaging an element of cooperation and handing over of the initiative to social partners are interpreted within a very limited scope, and they are frequently misinterpreted as the already mentioned assignment of public tasks implementation to social organisations. Also, characteristic of the group of the local government units surveyed is the fact that their striving to improve practices applied in that respect is limited. This conclusion may be considered a reply to the question posed by the author as to the scope of implementation and importance of public-social partnership, as it turns out that public-social partnership in the form assuming residents and resident organisations' participation in the planning process, followed by joint implementation of improvement related tasks, is actually implemented to a limited extent, by a limited number of local governments. At the same time, at the present stage of improvement and reform of activities carried out by the administration, such issues as improving the quality of the services provided or skilful process management appear to be more crucial in the context of development of their institutional capacity. Consequently, Poland's development strategies mentioned in the first part of the article ought to be considered all the more important. Based on their provisions regarding public-social partnership, one may suppose that in the coming years it will be treated more extensively as a prerequisite for modernisation of the activities carried out by the public sector and for its improvement in accordance with governance related postulates. Verification of the conclusion may contribute to further analyses and studies covering the public-social partnership problem and identifying its participation in the institutional development of local governments in Poland.

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