

CONSIDERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE QUESTION OF PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC INTEREST

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Submitted on 3 of September 2009

Accepted to publish on 18 of November 2009

Abstract

The article discusses the changing nature of local communities in terms of formation of inter-organizational partnerships. The central argument of this article is that while modern local communities can be construed as providers of social services, they could also become an advantageous tool for the implementation of collective public interests and encouragement of civic participation. Theoretical considerations concerning the local community as a network of social relationships are illustrated by data from a case study. Empirical conclusions reveal problems of existing institutional mechanisms for local initiatives to participate in local decisions.

Keywords: local community, public interest, inter-organizational partnership, civic engagement.

Introduction

The implementation of public interests can be delivered through partnership - working across different sectors, including the public sector, as well as various local agencies, such as non-governmental organizations, volunteers, non-institutionalized local leaders. Usually, local public institutions view local communities as representatives of civic participation in decision-making, especially related to local issues, such as infrastructure, business development, public health, housing management, community safety, as well as delivery of social services for the well-being of local citizens. The key theoretical argument presented in this article is that the urban local community is not only a provider of social services, but also an advantageous tool for the implementation of collective public interests on the local and regional level. The article analyses the question of implementation of public interest in local community settings. In this analysis, the article uses the approach of interorganizational partnership networks. The main actors which constitute an interorganizational partnership network are local/regional/state governmental bodies, business enterprises and civic organizations, including local community centres, labour unions, business associations and other voluntary organizations. We make an assumption that the actors of the network analysed in this article are connected through interpersonal relations, reciprocity, exchange of diverse resources and mutual trust. Moreover, structural differences in power and social status of the organizations involved in the network also influence their engagement and participation in the partnerships. Theoretically, local community may be defined as a set of social relationships, including diverse economic, political and social actors. Various authors of classical sociology emphasize the community as a particular form of social organization in terms of social interaction with an underlying geographical determinant (Warren, 1972, Effrat, 1973, Popplin, 1979, etc.), as a set of different interorganizational networks and formal/informal relationships (Wellman, (1979, 1999); Galaskiewicz, Laumann and Marsden, 1978; Galaskiewicz, 1979, etc.) or as a normative consensus (Etzioni, 1996). Other studies have incorporated the factors of democracy, civic culture and civic participation as indicators of local community development (Selznick, 1992, Putnam, 1993, Gilchrist, 2006, etc.). In Lithuanian academic discourse the concept of local community is analysed mainly in terms of community capacity building by provision of social services (Baršauskienė,

Leliūgienė, 2001, Štuopytė, 2002), communal solidarity and civic participation (Žiliukaitė, Ramonaitė, Nevinskaitė et al., 2006), or the development and effectiveness of rural communities (Juška, Poviliūnas, Pozzuto, 2006).

The aim of this article is to analyse the concept of local community and identify how various public and private initiatives collaborate and establish institutional partnerships on the local level for the implementation of public interests.

Theoretical insights are illustrated using data from a case study of a local community in the Aleksotas urban district, city of Kaunas, Lithuania. Empirical results deal with such questions as the building partnership in the local community, the perception of collective interests and how they can be implemented using the tools and opportunities provided by partnership in the local community.

1. The process of building partnerships: opportunities and limits

In a broader sense, the article deals with the idea of state-market-civil society relations in terms of public interests, the role of the community and the development of institutional partnerships on a local level. The main purpose of creating institutional partnerships in local settings is the delivery of public good in terms of common interests and goals, involving the creation of collective identities based on the perceptions of individual actors. The key discussion in this article centers upon the treatment of the local community not only as a provider of social services, but also as an effective tool for the implementation of collective public interests.

Effective partnership encourages and facilitates the involvement of organizations from the private and the public sectors as well as civil society organizations in local decision-making. In this part we discuss the concept of partnership mainly in terms of interorganizational networks, as it refers to a variety of diverse institutional actors which are involved in such networks. Our main argument is that local community governance is directly relevant to the development and sustainability of different partnerships on the local level and could be seen as an effective tool for local decision-making. According to Gilchrist, new connections and attitudes of partnership's actors evolve to ensure better communication, understanding and effectiveness. The consolidation of relationship networks that cross sector boundaries is crucial for building trust and respect among diverse actors of state, business and civil society. Various modes of engagement (interaction, dialogue, negotiation, learning and cooperation) contribute to successful partnerships, bypassing the structures and protocols of formal governance (Gilchrist, 2006, p.71). The origin of theoretical analysis of partnerships is closely related to the concept of interorganizational networks, thoroughly explored in organizational studies, public administration and political sciences. Preconditions for the formation and development of interorganizational networks are usually explained in terms of motives of individual actors, learning, trust, social norms, monitoring, equity, social, cultural and environmental factors (Brass et al., 2004, p. 802-804).

Accordingly, the theoretical framework requires that interorganizational partnerships be presented in terms of enablers and drivers, which can be useful in explaining the formation of various partnerships and networks in a local setting. The chosen framework allows us to combine the diverse theoretical approaches on the formation of institutional rather than personal partnerships between state, business and civic actors (see Figure 1).

In this model, the drivers of partnership formation and development are the factors which motivate the participants to support the establishment of appropriate partnerships. Most importantly, the drivers focus on shared goals, common issues, visions, values, and expectations for partnerships and their outcomes (Dorado, Giles, et al., 2009, p.370-371). The formation and endurance of a partnership depends on the benefits and costs expected by the participants (Brass et al., 2004).

The enablers are the factors which *enable the formation, maintenance, and/or development of partnerships beyond the parties' initial engagement* (Austin, 2000; Brass et al., 2004, cited from Dorado, Giles, et al., 2009, p.372). Three different sets of enablers are distinguished in the picture, including factors deriving from strategies and tactics used by the actors (factors which influence participants of the partnership), structural features of the organizations participating in the partnership as well as environmental, cultural and social context. It follows that the enablers are external social forces which shape the dynamics and the development of the partnership, e.g. the influence of political, economic or social conditions on the establishment of partnership, common norms of reciprocity and cooperation between participants, including the institutional background and engagement of participants.

As mentioned above, the concept of community as an interorganizational network could be an advantageous tool for the analysis of reciprocal partnerships in the local community which may manifest far beyond the locality's boundaries. In the case of interorganizational networks, the character of relations between diverse actors is instrumental, ranging from transfer of funds to more diffuse trans-

action of authority or moral support (Galaskiewicz, Laumann and Marsden, 1978, p.458-459). High-performing interorganizational networks function to protect the common interests of a community, and pursue shared goals and tasks (Ibid, p. 459).

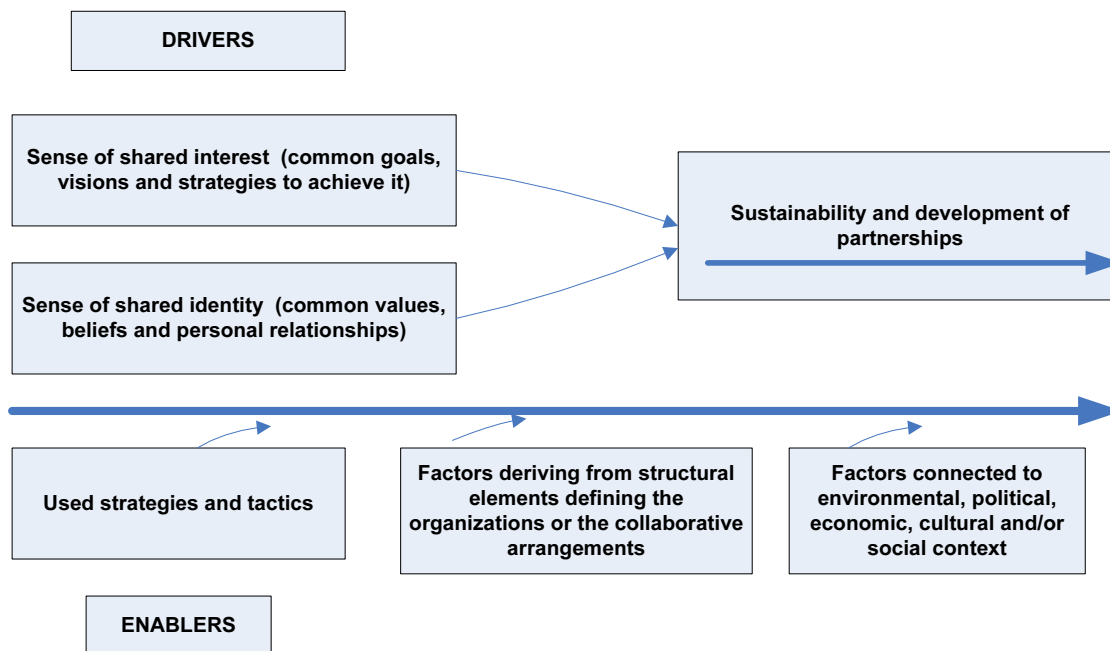


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Partnerships Development (based on Austin, 2000; Brass et al., 2004) (adopted from Dorado, Giles, et al., 2009, p.371).

This theoretical schema may be useful in understanding the formation of interorganizational networks in local communities. Accordingly, the most relevant driver of interorganizational networks in a local community is the sense of shared interests and shared identity among diverse state, business and civil actors. The implementation of public interest is understood as an outcome of the development and sustainability of a local community partnership. Consequently, participation in partnerships may be understood as purposeful and rationally-driven behavior of actors.

In conclusion, the concept of interorganizational partnerships suggests that the dynamics of partnerships are crucially dependent not only on the interpersonal relations between the actors, their shared goals and identity, common understanding of values and beliefs, but also on contextual factors which may influence the development of such partnerships. There may be several reasons for creating partnerships, including the interests of political, business, and community actors. Firstly, the partnerships analysed in this article may have enough potential to improve the use of economic, political and civic resources in the local community. One of the factors of partnership effectiveness is the ability to obtain financial and in-kind contributions from the private and civic sector, or the support of public partners to overcome public sector constraints. Partnerships may also add value by bringing together complementary services and fostering synergy between various local actors and leaders.

2. The case study

A case study of the *issue network* (referring to the notion of the specific public issue network based on a web of diverse interest groups by Hecl, 1978, cited by Thatcher, 1998, p. 391392, also see Rhodes, 1999) in the Aleksotas local community was designed to obtain a better understanding of the capacities of civil society organizations, particularly those of a local community to participate in solving localized public issues. The case study focuses on the question of how local communities organize themselves by developing partnership networks at all levels, both within and among localities. The research was carried out in 2007 in the city of Kaunas, Lithuania. *The main research question* consists of a few components. Firstly, what actions (strategies, tactics) of local leadership (non-governmental, economic and political actors) help utilize diverse resources for the implementation of

collective interests. Secondly, how can we observe the development and sustainability of interorganizational partnership. Finally, what is the common perception of public interest, how network actors imagine and pursue their goals.

An *issue network* of the Aleksotas community as an object of research was chosen because of a few main reasons. In order to trace the development of the partnership, the particular local development of the historical Aleksotas airport was chosen as an example. The Aleksotas airport was transferred to local municipality administration by the military forces of the dissolved Soviet Union in 1993. Nowadays this object has almost lost its functional and recreational significance. Business enterprises and local government institutions have tried to solve the problem of using the particular airport area for public purposes by developing an advanced technology park *Technopolis* in this area, which was finally established in 2008. On the other hand, the local community's goal was to keep the historical and cultural significance of the object by using it for tourism, recreation and aviation sport purposes. The issue remains controversial in ongoing public discourse.

In the first step of the case study, quantitative and qualitative content analysis was applied to mentions of the particular issue in local media during the period of 1993–2007. This was done to identify and select local leaders as non-governmental, political or economic actors (in 1993 the Aleksotas airport was re-nationalized. This date was chosen as the starting point of content analysis, the total amount being 152 articles).

The second step of the case study entailed semi-structured interviews with selected leaders (12 interviews with experts from directly related organizations such as Kaunas city municipality, Aleksotas community centre, Aleksotas local governmental unit *seniunija*, aviation organizations, the Museum of Aviation, public institution *Technopolis*, public institution *Airport of S.Darius and S.Girenas* and others) (performed in 2007 January–March using a prepared list of central actors as the result of local media content analysis). The aims of the interviews were: to get more information on institutional partnerships and strategies of participation in local community issues; to identify the central and peripheral actors of the *issue network*; to reveal problems of civic engagement, local initiatives and participation.

3. Enablers and drivers: contextual factors and the development of partnership

3.1. Contextual factors

As explained above, the enablers influence the dynamics of interorganizational partnerships as external social forces. The most important of them is the impact of political, economic and social context on the continuing development of partnerships, including collaboration between various participants of the network and their engagement in public issues. The data of qualitative and quantitative analysis of local media on a particular Aleksotas community issue (*the use of the historical Aleksotas airport for public purposes*) revealed the full-scale context of local community partnership development. The main emphasis is made on the formation of the *issue network*, the identification of central and peripheral actors in the network.

The *issue network* of the historical airport in the Aleksotas community was analysed in terms of territorial, political, economic and cultural aspects. One of the essential territorial aspects related to the development of the local community issue was the re-nationalization of the Aleksotas airport in 1993, to be administered by the Kaunas municipality. The process enabled a public discussion regarding the use of the historical Aleksotas airport for public purposes. The establishment of local government units (*seniunija*) in 2001 and a rising movement of local communities predetermined the fact that the community centre of Aleksotas became one of the most significant actors on the local level.

Another argument is that business as well as other social activities becomes more and more territorially relevant. The Aleksotas district was a highly industrialized zone during the Soviet period. Consequently, among the most significant economic factors it is possible to distinguish the process of privatization of the main industrial enterprises during the period of 1991–1995. Further development of industry and business is directly related to the quality of life in the district and raises the expectations of future investors in the area, including the Aleksotas airport.

Cultural aspects of the *issue network* context include the perception of collective identity among residents of the area. The Aleksotas district is known for its historical and cultural roots. This factor has enabled the local inhabitants to construct a cultural identity in terms of common values, mutual trust and development of good neighborly relations.

Data from the content analysis was used to identify of the *issue network*, which is defined as a net of diverse political, economic and community actors. The main conflict in the issue network emerges because of the different public interests among the actors. One reason to explain the public

interests conflict is related to the divergent perception and understanding of collective interests and visions among local actors. Data from the content analysis shows that the diverse interest groups of business, local, regional and state government and local community have different resources at their disposal to influence the local decision-making process. Because of economic (e.g. beneficial ties with investors, informal contacts with the parties concerned about common activities, information about financial opportunities) and political (e.g. political decision-making power, political authority) resources, the representatives of business and local authorities are powerful enough to influence the decision-making regarding the Aleksotas airport problem. In contrast, the actors of local community, such as the Aleksotas community centre, aviation associations, the other non-governmental organizations, have the advantage of favourable public opinion in mass media.

To summarize the data from the content analysis of local media, the solution of local issues in the community depends not only on the process of civil mobilization but more so on the political decisions and political goodwill. The main question concerns whether community initiatives have enough civil resources to influence the process of local decision-making, whether there is common understanding of collective interests and common interests among diverse local actors, including both political and economic ones. In this sense, local and regional political institutions participate in the process of public policy by representing public interests and supporting local political leadership. The growing participation of the local community results in the emergence of new forms of interorganizational partnerships among various economic, political and social actors in terms of interaction strategies such as informal contacts, consultation, negotiation and collaboration.

3.2. The strategies and tactics for creating partnership

The main question concerns the strategies used by the *issue network's* actors to develop effective interorganizational partnerships for the implementation of collective interests. Various strategies of common action such as negotiation, collaboration, support and competition can be established among different state, business and civic actors. The question is which steps are more effective at improving interrelations, mutual trust, and reciprocity among different actors in the *issue network*, and which strategies are more helpful in carrying out collective tasks and implementing public interests in the local community.

According to Lowndes and Skelcher regarding the life-cycle of multi-organizational partnerships, several stages of the *issue network* in the Aleksotas community can be distinguished (Lowndes, Skelcher, 1998, p.320). The first stage is called *pre-partnership collaboration*, which is based on the network form of governance and characterized by informality, trust and sense of common purpose. The second stage is *partnership creation and consolidation* characterized by hierarchy, assertion of status and authority, and the creation of formal procedures. According to Lowndes and Skelcher, *partnership program delivery* is characterized by the market mechanism of tendering and contracts, as well as a low level of cooperation among providers. The last stage is analyzed as *partnership termination and/or succession*, with emphasis on the re-assertion of the network governance mode, with the need to maintain commitment and community involvement (Lowndes, Skelcher, 1998, p.320).

In the analysis of the case study, the *pre-partnership collaboration* in the *issue network* can be marked as the first significant stage of the interorganizational partnership. The research data indicates that the primary impulse for network formation was related to the historical fact of the Aleksotas airport's transfer to the Kaunas municipality in 1993. In this stage, the role of the local municipality was crucial for the development of the *issue network*:

This problem became important in 1990-1995 when the Kaunas city municipality noticed that the airport is derelict, not useful to anybody, unusable, despite this area being 200 hectares, quite big, near the city centre...at that time this problem became very significant (representative of community centre, interview No 2).

Due to the state policy of decentralization, the establishment of local government units (*seniūnija*) in Kaunas region in 2001, the rising movement of local communities predetermined the fact that the community centre of Aleksotas became one of the most significant actors on the local level. The initial phase of the *issue network* was mainly contingent upon common perceptions of possible cooperation between political and community actors and thus encouraged further collective actions. In contrast, business representatives argue that the primary initiative for the establishment of an interorganizational partnership is closely related to the implementation of the project called *Technopolis* (advanced technology park which was established in 2008). Using more informal ways of seeking collaboration, the business actors emphasize the implementation of more rational and pragmatic collective interests.

There is a committee of innovations in the Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts where the businessmen discuss their problems. So that was the place where all discussions and initiatives emerged. After some time everyone realized that they (businessmen) are independent, but one soldier in the war field is not a

soldier. So that was the beginning for public actions and partnership...when we realized such a demand for partnership, the discussion on how to realize it emerged (business representative, interview No 1).

In the first stage, the strategies of actors possessing more economic and political resources were considered to be the most important factors for partnership development. The power and influence of the local community in the network was inadequate. The second phase is the *establishment of partnership and consolidation* of various interests. This step is mostly related to the establishment of the public organization *Technopolis* in order to promote business interests for the creation of the advanced technology park in the area of the Aleksotas airport. This step is characterized by the formation of various interest groups and attempts to implement their collective interests. *The establishment of partnership* is also a complicated process of negotiation among diverse actors in the network.

On the other point, when the demand for partnership had risen, the discussion emerged as to where to realize this demand. We were trying not for the first time to find contacts, to make contacts, but to make it last for a long time, we don't know the reason...(representative of business, interview No 5)

The establishment of the *Technopolis* project enabled the legitimation of interaction between political, economic and community actors in order to implement collective interests by solving the local problem of the Aleksotas airport. Furthermore, the involvement of the local community in the *issue network* was complicated because of the differences in perception of collective interests. The lack of appropriate information and the unwillingness of business and local government actors to negotiate were seen as the main stumbling block for the establishment of an effective partnership.

At first there was a huge desire on the part of businessmen to speak about their advanced technologies and that they will take this airport. When we heard that they are taking this object, we understood it as a danger for the airport. And it turned into a public discussion...The first meeting was heated and venomous, and afterwards they (businessmen) felt that they could not take it (the airport) so easily (representative of community centre, interview No 2).

The consolidation of interests in the partnership is closely related to the engagement of the Aleksotas local community in the process of establishing the advanced technology park. Furthermore, the local community has supported the implementation of public interests in the area perceived as the development of local infrastructure, encouragement of investments, and improvement of local well-being.

We think, for us, Technopolis is ok, if we support its construction. But we also want it to provide a benefit for Aleksotas and the community...we would like such type of areas to be expanded more and more; so that we wouldn't feel ashamed of our locality (representative of community centre, interview No 2)

The second step for the establishment of a partnership and consolidation of various interests, i.e. the need to formalize and legitimize the collaboration may be seen as one of the most important aspects. On the other hand, due to inadequacies in political, economic and information resources, disagreements among various actors of the *issue network* become more influential. Accordingly, community interests were less influential in the process of developing a partnership.

The research data reveals the next step in partnership development, i.e. entering the phase of *partnership program delivery*. The main strategies used by the actors of the *issue network* were consultation (search of information, advice and sharing other resources), negotiation, cooperation and competition. One of the most important challenges for local communities and other small-scale non-governmental organizations is the opportunity to become a potential partner or even a competitor in the partnership network. The success of collaboration depends directly on the ability of such organizations to establish and maintain relations with partners who possess more political or economic resources (Lowndes, Skelcher, 1998, p. 327).

According to the case study data, the strategy of consultation is reflected by the actors of the *issue network* trying to find the ways for possible collaboration. One expert argues, that one of the main tactics for successfully solving the problem of the airport was the search for diverse local partners and attempts to involve them in the partnership:

This is a very public issue and, first of all, it demands extensive support. It is natural that we need this. It's our goal to involve as many partners as possible. We are trying to define the content of this involvement...what we do in the framework of Technopolis, is our initiative or that of others, also that discussion continues in the community itself (business representative, interview No 5).

The strategy of negotiation is also an effective tactic for *partnership program delivery*. First, using the tactics of interest negotiation, the network actors strive to receive support from other actors who may have a different vision of the collective problem (in this instance, visions of the airport problem advocated by the local community centre, local governmental institutions and business differ in terms of common understanding and collective interests). Second, the effective development of a partnership network could be disrupted with the conflict between various actors. Experts emphasize common actions that could ensure efficient collaboration and partnership.

We have finally established contact with them (Technopolis). The people who want to work have come forward, but not those who are poking into other people's business and telling us what we have to do. They have

a decent, favorable attitude and would like to expand their connections with us. They have a rather positive point of view on the preservation of cultural heritage (representative of community center, interview No 7).

Another important tactic of *partnership program delivery* is collaboration and mutual support which has had a positive influence on the resolution of the Aleksotas airport problem. Empirical data from the case study reveals that the most important factor for collaboration is a negotiated understanding of the problem and a consensus of common opinion. One of the most successful outcomes of the partnership network is the implementation of the *Technopolis* project.

I think that the Technopolis project is the product of common agreement, because the local governmental institution seniunija, as well as the Aleksotas community centre and aviators already approve this project. And they have started implementing it (representative of aviation organization, interview No 9)

One of the main reasons for effective collaboration is the common understanding of collective interests as well as possession of political and economic resources. The local community is not powerful enough in terms of political resources to influence decision-making regarding the localized problem. On the other hand, the establishment of an organizational coalition with the other local political and economic actors is one of the most successful strategic steps for the implementation of collective interests.

Based on the results of interviews with experts, we also find that competition was also used as one of the tactics of interorganizational partnership. The main competitive tension emerged between the coalition of business and local community interests on the one hand and local, regional, and state governmental institutions on the other. The main reason for this competition manifests in terms of different visions for the solution for the local problem. Contrasts in vision are directly related to differences in political power trying to influence local decisions. Grassroots initiatives always need the support of political power and seek to establish an effective collaboration with political and economic actors. Otherwise, the majority of local community decisions would fail.

When members of the Council (the City Council), who are very influential people, start talking about how they will attempt to change the appropriate laws and decisions to implement their goals in this area. That's why, when we hear such statements we don't just stand around. We try to block it, by saying no and organizing different meetings and gatherings (representative of aviation organization, interview No 9).

In conclusion, one of the most effective strategies for the development of an interorganizational partnership in the Aleksotas community has been negotiation and collaboration, which could be achieved by common dialogue and meetings with diverse actors in the *issue network*. By such means, social interaction has increased mutual trust and density of possible contacts. It has helped create a trust-based (in)formal contracts with other related organizations. Furthermore, the decision-making power of various interest groups varies according to the dynamics of the interorganizational partnership. In the third phase of interorganizational partnership, which is related to the partnership program delivery, community interests have become more powerful in terms of civic engagement and grassroots initiatives. The main strategies used by community actors in the *issue network* are negotiation, consultation, dialogue and consensus-building, which have proven to be the most effective tools for the implementation of locally-based public interests.

Conclusions

The appearance of local activism and community initiatives indicates a transformation of the interaction mode between the state, the market and the third sector. The community can be construed as a dynamic structure of different interrelations. Thus, the relational dimension as well as subjective preferences, values and beliefs of network actors highlight the importance of *agency*. The background of the community is neither always related to common preferences, values or loyalty nor is it an emotionally constructed formation. Furthermore, the modern community cannot be considered only as a social policy tool for the provision of social services. On the contrary, economic and political interrelations and rational interests tend to be the most important criteria for negotiation and partnership between diverse interests in local communities.

The empirical study reveals that the interorganizational partnership network in the local community is shaped by several diverse actors, which intermingle with different political, economic, social and information resources. The disparity between the potential and the legitimacy of local initiatives and the involvement of political institutions could be analysed as one of the main factors in modern community development. The consolidation of rationally-oriented interests binds the community actors together, but also creates tension between them. Therefore, dialogue, negotiation and cooperation are some of the most effective tools for decreasing competitive tensions in a partnership network. Research reveals that social, economic and political actors tend to seek out cooperation and partnership

rather than competition in local community decision-making. These strategies and tactics of common action are oriented towards the implementation of common public interests.

However, the main analytical questions still remain unanswered: could the particular *new* form of local community governance become a sufficient basis for the development of existing civic potential and traverse the limits of institutional ambiguities; does the approach of partnership networks give us an adequate explanation for the insufficiency of local initiative mechanisms to influence local decisions; and finally, what is the role of governmental bodies in supporting the creation of formal and informal networks of civil society organizations, interest groups, neighbourhoods and acquaintances in localities for the implementation of public interests.

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PARTNERYSČIŲ KŪRIMO IR VIEŠOJO INTERESO KLAUSIMAS ANALIZUOJANT VIETOS BENDRUOMENES

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Mykolo Romerio universitetas

Santrauka

Straipsnyje keliamas pagrindinis probleminis klausimas yra susijęs su vietos bendruomenės sąvokos konceptualizavimu, diskutuojant, ar šiuolaikinė vietos bendruomenė suvokiama tik kaip socialinių paslaugų teikėjas, ar ji gali tapti viešąja erdve, skatinančia pilietinį dalyvavimą, siekiant bendruomenės gyvenamojoje vietoje įgyvendinti viešuosius interesus. Straipsnyje analizuojamas institucinių partnerysčių kūrimo vietos bendruomenėse klausimas, siekiant užmegzti ir palaikyti neformalius kontaktus tarp pilietinio sektoriaus, verslo ir valdžios institucijų, skatinti sektorių bendradarbiavimą, taip pabrėžiant ir vietos valdymo problematiką. Sociologine prasme, šis procesas taip pat siejamas su didėjančiu pilietiniu sąmoningumu, subsidiarumo principo įgyvendinimu ir vietos iniciatyvų aktyvinimu, atstovavimu vietos interesams bei siekiu remiantis partneryste bendradarbiauti su verslu bei valdžia. Vietos bendruomenė straipsnyje analizuojama kaip struktūra socialinių ryšių, kurie nebūtinai formuojasi remiantis bendrais įsitikinimais, vertybėmis arba lojalumu bendruomenei. Pagrindiniu motyvu formuojant partnerystės tinklus vietos bendruomenėje tampa bendras viešojo intereso suvokimas ir siekis jį įgyvendinti.

Remiantis vietos bendruomenės atvejo tyrimo rezultatais analizuojamos partnerystės ir vietos bendruomenės veikėjų, susijusių su problemos tinklu, bendradarbiavimo strategijos ir taktikos, įgyvendinant kolektyvinius interesus bei siekiant apginti viešąjį interesą. Nemažai dėmesio skiriama vietos institucijų dalyvavimo galimybių ir pilietinių iniciatyvų problematikos aspektams.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: vietos bendruomenė, viešasis interesas, organizacijų partnerystė, pilietinis angažavimas.