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THE LEADER PROGRAMME IN CENTRAL EUROPE. A NEW LOCAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES¹

Abstract. The implementation of a new European policy based on integrated rural development is an entirely new experiment in the Central European countries, which formerly belonged to the communist system. This paper explores the conditions and the context in which the Local Development Model is being transferred from former member states to new ones, and the way it has been implemented. To examine this issue, we consider the European Union's Leader programme (an acronym of Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale), which became the fourth axis of the European Rural Policy (2007–2013). The Leader approach is usually presented as an original way of supporting local development, especially through a Local action group (LAG), which is a local body constituted of public and private stakeholders. We focus on how this approach is put into effects in five post-communist states, four of which are new EU members. (Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, eastern Germany and Poland). Downloading policy to the local communities takes place via various hierarchical modes of governance. Domestic authorities (or transfer operators) transpose and implement European rules and norms, which are more flexible than the former development policies. Looking at the main differences between the countries we explore how the original model is being distorted by domestic institutional factors. Policy transfer processes are not restricted to ministries of agriculture but involve a wide variety of nongovernmental actors mediating the policy transfer to the local stakeholders, who are the acting receivers. The Leader model is experimented in various territorial and social contexts, some more and some less receptive to this new way of thinking and managing local development. This paper is based on the relevant academic literature, on official national sources, and a field research survey. It is a cross-national comparative work that takes into account national and local variations in order to highlight similarities and differences in the transfer of a policy model.

Keywords: LEADER Programme, local development, European Rural Development Policy, policy transfer, Central Europe.

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1. Introduction

As part of a new approach to public action, local development has gradually become institutionalised in the form of both national and European programmes (Smith 1995; Deberre 2007; Spieser 2008). This new model of development, based on a bottom-up approach to the use of local resources and involvement of local people in the design and implementation of development strategies, began in the United Kingdom and France in the 1970s. Seen by some as the forerunner of a post-industrial economy (Pecqueur 2006; Davezies 2008) and by others as a pointless project disconnected from reality, it was successfully promoted at the European level in the 1990s within the framework of the EU's LEADER² pilot programmes, (integrated since 2003 into the European Rural Development Policy, the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy).

In assessing the LEADER approach based on the principle of local partnerships – between entrepreneurs, elected officials and voluntary sector representatives in order to design and implement development strategies – a related question is whether it is likely to help strengthen local democracy. Most analysts agree that it is innovative (Osti 2000) and transferable to each Member State insofar as it allows them a relative freedom in implementation. Although the systems, defined at the European level, are to be applied in identical fashion, each Member State is allowed to adapt the ERDP objectives to its own priorities and situation. States also have considerable latitude concerning the financial resources and forms of implementation for this policy, which they may interpret variously according to national reception of the idea and translate into programmes integrated into their own rural development strategies (Chevalier 2012).

It is relevant to ask: Has this transplant of the LEADER model proposed in Axis IV of the ERDP, as conceived and formulated by the “old” Member States, been a success or a failure? Does its application prove that the new stakeholders have acquired the political capacity to use the LEADER instruments to enable rural areas in the new Member States to catch up with those in the old Member States? What can be said about the effects of transferring this policy?

Our purpose is to propose some ideas about the prospects for and limitations on the new Member States' experience with the LEADER instrument. At the present stage of the application of the LEADER model (2007–2013), it is premature to attempt to assess its impact on the development of the territories concerned, so we shall merely evaluate the transfer process and the rationales for action that go with it in various Member States and LAGs. To that end, we shall identify the critical moments in the transfer process and the responsibility of the government operator in the sequence for transposing the instrument. The bottom-up principle of public action is far from being respected by all Member States and has seen

² Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale.

regulatory ‘reinforcement’ that has in fact distorted the philosophy of the LEADER model to such an extent as to detach it from its initial purpose (as in Hungary). Once formalised and included with a specific system of public action (national programmes), the LEADER instrument is no longer an effective vector of the original model, and its basic principles have been modified, or even distorted. Thus the transfer process may lead to the EU LEADER model being either absorbed, transformed, or even having its founding paradigm rejected.

We examine a second set of lessons to be drawn concerning the effects of disseminating the model in rural areas. At local level, the LEADER instrument ideally harmonises within a territory, a local society with its own social relations, elites and resources. The learning of the institutional arrangements occurs within the particular context of each LAG. The local stakeholders come together to build a partnership on a territorial basis, devise a strategy, and design and implement development projects. This learning involves a process of buying into the local development approach, during which the stakeholders assimilate new information and combine it with their own past experience in order to include it in the actions they plan for the future. Based on this understanding, social learning is able to bring about changes that affect how decisions are taken and to acquire new instruments for strategic action (Hall 1993).

2. At the national level: absorption, transformation, or inertia?

Does this transfer involve a “Europeanisation” of the political rationale for local development? Under “adaptive pressure” from the EU, the transposition of the CAP second pillar into the institutional system in each country has created a framework for action, i.e., a set of norms, rules, methods and procedures. This institutionalisation has included the dissemination of ideas and concepts that underpin the model of local development. In most of the new Member States, not least in the Czech Republic, the transfer of the discourse occurred via the training of project leaders and experts.

The government operator interprets the model so as to make it compatible with the forms of regulation specific to the political system in that country. However, despite reforms to state organisation introduced under pressure from the EU (such as regionalisation), the principles of subsidiarity, contractualisation, partnership and territorial governance have sometimes been accepted at a purely formal level. The new way of undertaking territorial public action may well come up against inertia on the part of senior decision-makers shaped by a background of hyper-centralisation.

The instrument of public action proposed by the LEADER approach may be defined as “a normative system, both technical and social, of general application embodying a practical conception of the relations between government and

the governed that is based on a specific conception of regulation” (L a s c o u m e s, S i m a r d 2011: 18). With this in view, we shall examine the use the stakeholders make of the system. What ideas underlie the choice of methods for implementing the institutional system? Does a stakeholder intend to guide public action or direct it with those techniques of political domination that only a state authority can mobilise? What is the nature of the political purpose that drives the state stakeholder?

To describe the uses a state stakeholder may make of the LEADER instrument, we propose an interpretation grid for the forms of regulation used. On the basis of criteria specifying the form of regulation for LEADER action, the following table presents two opposing rationales for implementing the LEADER instrument.

Table 1. Forms of regulation for the LEADER instrument

Regulation of LEADER action tools	Intervention rationale	Support rationale
Steering (basic approach)	top down	bottom up
Contractualisation procedures	prescription	incentives
Rules for partnership formation	binding (prescriptive criteria)	volunteer stakeholders' free choice
Rules for defining action perimeter	overlap with electoral or administrative boundaries	the project defines the territory
Territorial structure	uniform	varied
Coverage of rural areas	almost complete	relatively high
Selection of LAG projects	lax	strict
Allocation of funding to LAGs	principle of distribution	principle of differentiation

S o u r c e: ALDETEC programme.

Seen in this way, the distinctions between rationales of intervention and support provide an analytical grid for the ways in which a government's techniques and tools are combined. In most cases, neither of these rationales is applied completely. But they do correspond to dominant trends identifiable in each country.

The support rationale complies with the LEADER paradigm of public action. It starts from the bottom up, presupposing local stakeholders' capacity for initiative and their ability to form a partnership of volunteers and outline their perimeter for action. At the national level, this means the formation of a varied structure that only partly covers all rural areas, because LAG projects are selected competitively (principle of differentiation).

The intervention rationale comes from the government stakeholder's desire to use the LEADER instrument for its own specific objectives. Consequently, the institutional system is a top-down command and control system. Procedures lay down strict rules for forming partnerships and defining perimeters, using existing

institutional structures. The central authority's intention is to impose the structure that best fits its objective of using the LEADER approach for reasons that constitute virtually central planning and redistributive management.

Table 2. Typology of regulation

Regulation of LEADER action tools	Germany	Czech Republic	Poland	Hungary	Lithuania
Steering (basic approach)	bottom up	bottom up	bottom up (overseen by voivodeships)	top down	top down
Contractualisation procedures	incentives	incentives and prescription?	incentives becoming prescriptions	prescriptions	prescriptions
Rules for partnership formation	volunteer stakeholders' free choice	volunteer stakeholders' free choice	binding, variable between voivodeships	binding	binding
Territorial structure	varied	varied	varied	uniform	uniform
Coverage of rural areas	moderate	low	variable between voivodeships	high	high
Selection of LAG projects	strict	moderate	moderate	lax	lax
Allocation of funding to LAGs	principle of differentiation	principle of differentiation	principle of differentiation	principle of distribution	principle of distribution
Dominant rationale	support	support	intervention by voivodeships	intervention	intervention

Source: ALDETEC program.

Between the German Federal government's strict compliance with the principles underpinning the LEADER instrument and Hungary's adoption of an interventionist approach, an entire range of situations is observable. This variety may be related to the political traditions and territorial structures of various Member States. A support rationale drives implementation in decentralised or decentralising political systems (whether federal or unitary)³. An intervention rationale predominates

³ The justification for a geographical approach and for the specific nature of a multi-scalar approach is that the two may occur simultaneously at the regional level within each Member State. Such is the case with the German *Länder*, where procedures may vary between incentive and prescription, and in Poland, currently decentralising, with the voivodeships.

in highly centralised political systems, where regionalisation has been limited to mere administrative dispersal (Hungary).

The rationale of the national operator contributes to diverting or even distorting the original model, but does not prejudice the acceptability of the institutional arrangements for local stakeholders or the way they appropriate them.

3. At the local level: both institutionalisation and territorialisation⁴

3.1. The LEADER instrument cannot be dissociated from local features of buy-in

The institutionalisation begun by the national operator is achieved at the local level by the application of the LEADER approach, i.e., creation of a partnership, definition of a perimeter of action, and recruitment of members for its decision-making bodies. This succession of operations, laid out in the procedures, occurs within the context for reception specific to each LAG. Once it has been adapted, codified, inserted into an institutional system, the LEADER instrument is incorporated into the local context by a twofold process of territorialisation and institutionalisation (involving learning and buy-in from the stakeholders). The system of action that comprises the LAG is the product of a geographical situation and a local history, and its proper operation depends on the quality of the relations the stakeholders form among themselves. This shows the importance of the interrelations of the stakeholders, who take over the LEADER instrument and adapt it to their views and objectives.

3.2. Strong control by elected officials over local development

Ground surveys have revealed the key role played by local elites. Examination of the formation of partnerships demonstrates the significant part taken by a handful of elected officials in the construction of the LAGs. In Lithuania, where local autonomy has not yet been established, the local elites are recruited from the voluntary sector that structures “rural communities” (Dedeire, Mačilytė 2012). In the Czech Republic and Hungary, the rules laid down for forming partnerships (representation of the three sectors) are formally obeyed, but may be adjusted or even manipulated to strengthen the clout of mayors on the LAG’s

⁴ “Normative” territorialisation means defining areas for action (or sites with public problems) according to a national framework, even if negotiated locally. “Pragmatic” territorialisation does not see the territory as the problem, but rather as a project aimed at providing a solution.

decision-making bodies. Since the mayors recruit the managers who are thus, as it were, the agents of local elected officials, they can guide the design and implementation of strategies. They do so on behalf of the public interest, the principle that legitimises their action. As they see it, the sphere defining the public interest rarely extends beyond the bounds of their own municipalities. Most of the projects are designed for an enclosed and determined area of the local authority, and their impact is usually restricted to the needs of the village population (renovation of collective buildings, public facilities, and services)⁵. Few projects cover more than one municipality and even fewer are jointly decided upon by separate municipalities. Project funding from the LEADER programme constitutes an addition to the local authority's scarce budget resources. The LEADER approach is less an instrument for driving a cross-municipal project territory than one of the ways of meeting local expectations. Since local elected officials have the political ability to mobilise resources (information, administrative competencies) and propose project designs, they tend to guide the initiatives towards benefits for the management of their own municipalities⁶.

3.3. The traditional ruler-ruled relationship

The institutionalisation of the LEADER instrument by local elected officials is based on a traditional conception of the ruler-ruled relationship, mainly inherited from a period when local citizens had no say in their dealings with a local administration that was merely an agency of State authority. Although representative democracy has been consolidated by two decades of local autonomy and operates on a pluralistic basis, it is not yet fully open to citizens' participation. Although the elected body (town council and mayor) possesses a strong symbolic force, its resources for action are usually limited. The burden of running basic public services is a heavy one for local governments and they do not have the essential resources for coping with it. Furthermore, despite reforms that promote decentralisation, the political systems of the countries concerned still bear the mark of centralising traditions that, in the case of Hungary, have been reasserted by top-down government practices. The assertion of local government's political leadership over the municipal territory varies by locality and country. The political capacity of local elites to improve the economic and social conditions of their territories is more uncertain and fragile where the decentralisation of powers has not been

⁵ This is also true in Lithuania, where projects are proposed by rural communities, and in Poland by villages (*solectwa*, sing. *solectwo*).

⁶ Even before the process of European integration, the establishment of local autonomy in the early 1990s was an initial decisive step towards the Europeanisation of institutions. A decade later, under adaptive pressure from the EU, regionalisation was a further stage in this Europeanisation.

completed (Lithuania). In post-Communist systems in general, the implantation of participative democracy is hampered by a stereotyped view of the ruler-ruled relationship and a lack of mutual trust among citizens, whether neighbours or members of the local authority. As our surveys have shown, the stakeholders involved in LAGs, particularly the elected officials, are convinced that their citizens want to be properly governed without necessarily participating. However, the vast majority of these elected officials say that they want to take part in managing public affairs. The local elite's conception of the ruler-ruled relationship, inherited from the previous system, in practice restricts the exercise of participative democracy to those representatives who have been elected. All attempts to widen the scope of deliberation to local residents (forums, public meetings) quickly collapse, because the hopes for participation initially aroused by the novelty of the LEADER approach have already been disappointed. Where bureaucratic procedures swallow up initiatives by local stakeholders (Hungary), fatigue soon sets in. Local democracy exposed to LEADER institutional learning only emerges in a strengthened form when a new, more "inclusive", manner of exercising authority radically alters local governance. LEADER procedures, fully understood by a handful of professionals (mainly the LAG administration's managers and staff) are used to issue calls for tenders, select projects, and monitor their timely implementation (at least locally). These procedures provide a stable framework for action. However, the scope for action remains limited to a small number of project proposers (mainly municipalities and voluntary associations in their direct sphere of influence) and does not inspire the entrepreneurs and farmers whose projects would help diversify economic activities. However, in the case of the Henneberger Land, it is worth noting the role of particular entrepreneurs, especially those at the head of major farm cooperatives, in actions of integrated development (landscape management, environment, renewable energy generation, agri-food production and processing). The behaviour of elected officials is at best that of good managers of collective amenities and services, concerned with public welfare. Very few of them see themselves as "entrepreneurs" of local development, able to inspire and coordinate the initiatives of economic stakeholders. This strong trend towards the "municipalisation" (or "communalisation") of the LEADER programme corresponds to the need to upgrade facilities in order to ensure the preconditions of a development restricted to the municipal territory.

3.4. Territorial nature of LEADER collective action

How is the LEADER approach territorialised? What institutionally defined spaces comprise the perimeter for local action? How does the institutional network of local authorities compare with the intervention perimeters of LEADER-type

actions? Does this create or strengthen a territorial identity as a factor of social cohesion? These questions are not rhetorical in countries where successive changes in the political system, particularly after the collapse of Communism and including the present as well⁷, have brought about changes in political-administrative boundaries. Close attention must be paid to the relationship that is formed between the pattern of basic rural communities (local people's residential scale), local authorities, and inter-communal groupings (recently introduced) and the LEADER action perimeters.

First it should be borne in mind that people are strongly attached to their places of residence and long-term living environments (parish, village). These elementary territories form the "concrete" cells of the mesh (in the sense that C. Raffestin gives to "maillles") (Raffestin 1980) that residents recognise around them. The requirements of rational and efficient management of basic infrastructure and services have often justified reshaping the administrative pattern of collective life (particularly during the Communist period). As they were extended and detached from the scale of the local community, these administrative units formed an "abstract" mesh for their residents, who saw this process as weakening their territorial identity.

The restoration of local authority's autonomy in the post-Communist countries sometimes went along with a return to the old "concrete" mesh, even to the extent of extreme fragmentation of municipal units (as in the Czech Republic and, to some extent, Hungary). Local authorities with freely elected representatives became the cells of democracy, but the excessive stripping down of the territories of local administration has had negative effects on the management of public affairs. This is one reason it has been proposed to develop inter-municipal arrangements, promoted by top-down incentives. Over the last twenty or so years, micro-regions have been set up in the Czech Republic and Hungary (Maurel 2004). These spaces for inter-municipal cooperation are institutionalised to varying extents, and each country has its own way of running them. The territories they are based on are variable and rarely form the basis for a strong, immediate sense of belonging among the communities combined in this way. Our study areas comprise a wide variety of patterns⁸. Among them, the Polish municipalities (*gminy*, sing. *gmina*), which have kept the same boundaries since they were created in 1974, are more stable territories that enable rural residents to position themselves easily. Their size makes them relatively appropriate areas for the management of public services.

⁷ Administrative divisions in Hungary have recently been redrawn yet again, with the restoration of the former districts or *járások*, sing. *járás* (abolished under the Communists).

⁸ The Ostrožsko and Horňácko micro-regions coincide with lands inherited from a mythical history that makes identification easier. Conversely however, the past may sometimes cast a heavy shadow on the present. An example is the Úhlava ecoregion, where rehabilitation of the memory-based heritage of the Sudeten Germans does not help consolidate local identity. In Hungary, the divisions imposed by the central statistical office KSH take no account at all of ties formed by freely chosen inter-municipal cooperation (Pálné-Kovács 2011).

Where LEADER intervention perimeters are a combination of more than one municipality or *gmina*, they bring together parts of a “concrete” territorial mesh to construct a new territoriality by means of a common strategy and projects. However, when the perimeters are established under outside pressure on the basis of an “abstract” mesh (districts in Lithuania or statistical microregions in Hungary), it is hard to form a sense of belonging because the relationship is not one of territoriality. Territorial cohesion must therefore be built on other factors of legitimacy (political in nature). Where this does not happen, the LAG becomes a sort of “superstructure” for overseeing the initiatives of local authorities and the project territory is unlikely to become a reality in daily life. The overlapping of various political jurisdictions may in some cases thwart the effects expected from the LEADER instrument.

3.5. Effects of institutional transfer

Across the new Member States in Central Europe, the processes of implementing the LEADER instrument are equally as varied as they are in the old Member States, which have a longer experience with it. The form of public policy transfer promoted by the EU gives all Member States leeway to adapt the LEADER instrument to the rationales for action that meet their own public policy objectives. National frames of reference, i.e., the institutional features, stakeholders and cultural factors likely to determine the reception of European norms and policies, are a powerful factor for differentiation. The adaptive pressure applied by the EU is variously perceived and integrated into these national frames of reference and leads to differentiated rationales for action. The learning of the LEADER approach also depends on the receptive context at the local level, particularly in mobilising the elites and influencing their perception of its usefulness for meeting local problems⁹. The implementation of the LEADER instrument is generally in the hands of a group of elected officials and managers, who form a “project class”, as I. Kovách and E. Kučerova put it (Kovách, Kučerova 2006). Where LEADER principles are poorly disseminated within local society and stakeholders are only moderately involved in preparing strategies and projects, the limitations of the transfer mechanism are apparent. By cross-tabulating the rationale for action due to the national frame of reference with the form of reception by local people, we may define a matrix of types of situation as illustrated below.

⁹ The term “receptive context”, as we use it here, differs from the notion of “local context” defined by V. Rey (coord. 1996), which includes more geographical features, such as density, accessibility, economic structures, *etc.*, which we call geographical potential. Our approach is more sociological and experience-based.

Table 3. Europeanisation by institutional transfer of the LEADER model

	Support rationale	Intervention rationale
Extensive buy-in from a variety of local stakeholders	model absorbed (Germany: Henneberger Land LAG)	model adapted (Lithuania: Joniškis LAG)
Limited buy-in from a “project class” (an elite)	model adapted (Czech Republic: Podlipansko, Ostrožsko a Hornácko, Úhlava LAGs)	inertia (Hungary: Zengő-Duna, Mecsekvidék LAGs)

S o u r c e: ALDETEC program.

To describe the effects of institutional transfer on Europeanisation¹⁰, we use the terms absorption, adaptation and inertia in a sense close to that used by S. Saugger and Y. Surel, although they apply them to the national level only (Saugger, Surel 2006).

Maximum effect is achieved where a support rationale encourages extensive buy-in of the LEADER model by local stakeholders, as occurs in the new *Länder*, where the learning process has gone on for over two decades. The projects and achievements of the Henneberger Land LAG are evidence of the absorption of the European model in the spirit intended. Other countries, further behind with their learning, are on a trajectory of adaptation of the LEADER model. They are attempting to overcome the institutional obstacles, either with a support rationale for transferring the model (Czech Republic) or in a more interventionist manner (Lithuania). But with the Lithuanian LAGs, active participation by rural communities is counterbalancing the influence of a top-down management style.

Only Hungary presents a state of inertia, produced by a top-down management that blocks any channels that might disseminate the ideas and values of the LEADER model. By expropriating the use of the LEADER instrument for the benefit of local authorities, the action of the elites is a form of resistance to Europeanisation.

¹⁰ Once integration is completed, Europeanisation advances via common programmes and policies in a more flexible manner than with the transposition of the *acquis communautaire*. It takes the form of Europeanising the rules, practices, and instruments of public action. C. Radaelli states that these may be seen as “processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies” (Radaelli 2003: 30).

3.6. The scale of public action

The question of the “right level” for action (the subsidiarity question) lies at the heart of the challenges of institutionalisation and territorialisation of the LEADER model. The EU allows complete freedom for national and local stakeholders to determine the political-administrative levels and define the perimeters for intervention. The implementation of LEADER public action involves choices of scale, that may be interpreted as the result of stakeholders’ actual strategies for hegemony, at both the national and regional/local levels. The perimeters of local action groups lie at the intersection of top-down and bottom-up tendencies. From above, the central government may be more or less directive and impose the institutional divisions. From below, local stakeholders ponder which criteria to use to map out their territories for action. Although the process of implementing the LEADER model has without doubt strengthened inter-municipal cooperation, the rationale that underpins its social and political formation may vary considerably. Some social stakeholders, attracted by this new scale for their action, have seized the opportunity to consolidate their own particular interests. This is especially the case with a number of local elected officials, exercising political leadership, who have taken over the system to strengthen their legitimacy. Other social groups, well organised in the voluntary sector, may also adopt an elitist attitude.

Following our research into five countries and ten LAGs, it must be concluded that the new Member States are no longer a uniform bloc displaying the special characteristics of post-Communism, but are now appropriating the instruments of European public policy each in their own differentiated manner.

4. Conclusions

Can we really talk about an adjustment of the local development model encouraging the involvement of local beneficiary communities? The bottom-up approach implies that local actors and citizens are encouraged to think about the development process in a new way. The mental heritage of the Communist system, the passivity of local people, and the ever-widening gap between national political traditions and the principles of local elective democracy still represent a substantial obstacle to the implementation of local development principles. The unsuitable nature of rural social structures in terms of the presuppositions of the bottom-up approach continues to have an inhibiting effect on the reception of the Leader model. In effect, the lack of social capital, and, more particularly, of entrepreneurs, as well as the weakness of social links, the overall under-education of the rural population and, above all, the process of demographic ageing very often combine to militate against the participation of local actors and the emergence

of partnerships (even though such approaches are at the basis of local development policy). It is therefore difficult for local communities to adapt and make good use of their skills and exploit their own resources.

That said, most local politicians are convinced that the Leader programme is useful. For them, this “manna” from the European Union can help build the kind of infrastructure needed in their constituencies. This positive attitude is an example of a new state of mind which undoubtedly accounts, to a large degree, for the programme’s success. Since civil society is still relatively weak, generally restricted networks usually consist of a few groups of people gravitating around politicians and project heads, all of whom know and mutually support one another and are able to impose their view at the level of the local territory. The activism of the political elites, who play a dominant role, clearly contrasts with the passivity of most of the inhabitants of rural areas.

Do the methods for transferring the model implemented in the four central European countries conform to the original principles of the Leader programme? With the increasing involvement of “facilitator-actors” – particularly project research and consultancy firms – in the process of transferring the local development model and elaborating strategic orientation documents (theoretically designed by the project initiators), the very principles of the Leader programme are under threat of being commandeered and replaced by a uniform approach to rural development. In effect, in order to respond to the admissibility criteria and thus improve their chances of obtaining a Local Action Group, politicians must strictly observe the directives issued by national bodies. They are invited, amongst other things, to appropriate the grammar expressing the rules governing the Leader programme. Due to its bureaucratic nature, those unfamiliar with its principles are often required to use consultancy firms, project managers, and development agencies to prepare their rural development strategy for them. In fact, often partially “a-territorialized”, the strategies elaborated within the framework of remunerated missions and the projects deriving from them reflect a real lack of originality. In such cases, the real objective of the Leader approach – innovation in strategic thinking – may be neglected, to a greater or lesser degree. Today, the most widespread method for transferring the rural development model and elaborating strategies seems to consist of copying “turnkey” formats, bereft of originality.

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PROGRAM LEADER W EUROPIE CENTRALNEJ. NOWA POLITYKA ROZWOJU LOKALNEGO

Streszczenie. Wdrażanie nowej polityki opartej na koncepcji zrównoważonego rozwoju obszarów wiejskich jest nowym doświadczeniem krajów Europy Centralnej, wcześniej należących do systemu komunistycznego.

Celem artykułu jest określenie warunków oraz kontekstu implementacji modelu rozwoju lokalnego. Przedmiotem analizy jest program LEADER, stanowiący IV oś wspólnej polityki rolnej (2007–2013). Zazwyczaj podejście LEADER przedstawiane jest jako oryginalna metoda (narzędzie) wsparcia lokalnego, w szczególności dzięki zastosowaniu lokalnych grup działania (LAG), których uczestnikami są przedstawiciele sektorów: prywatnego i publicznego. Autorzy koncentrują się na sposobach wdrażania (podejścia LEADER) w pięciu postkomunistycznych państwach, z których cztery są nowymi członkami UE (Czechy, Węgry, wschodnie Niemcy i Polska).

Wdrażanie polityki UE na poziomie lokalnych społeczności w wymienionych krajach, analizowane jest z zastosowaniem hierarchicznych modeli zarządzania.

Wdrażanie polityki UE na poziomie lokalnych społeczności analizować można za pomocą różnych hierarchicznych modeli zarządzania. Głównym zadaniem władz lokalnych jest dostosowanie europejskich przepisów i norm do wcześniej istniejącej polityki rozwoju w danym regionie. Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza modyfikacji oryginalnego modelu rozwoju, wynikających z funkcjonowania lokalnych czynników instytucjonalnych w badanych krajach. Procesy wdrażania polityki rozwoju lokalnego wychodzą poza ministerstwa rolnictwa uwzględniając szeroki wachlarz instytucji sektora pozarządowego prowadzących negocjacje z lokalnymi interesariuszami, którzy są odbiorcami tych rozwiązań. Model LEADER stanowi nowy sposób myślenia i zarządzania rozwojem lokalnym, uwzględniający konteksty społeczne i terytorialne. Podstawą niniejszego artykułu jest obszerna analiza literatury przedmiotu, oficjalnych danych krajowych oraz wyników międzynarodowego badania porównawczego uwzględniającego krajowe i lokalne czynniki wpływające na różnice w sposobie transferu modelu polityki rozwoju lokalnego.

Słowa kluczowe: program LEADER, rozwój lokalny, europejska polityka rozwoju obszarów wiejskich, transfer polityki, Europa Centralna.