

DOES THE STRATEGIC PLANNING OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT RESULT FROM THE MOTIVES INDICATED IN LITERATURE? CONTEMPORARY MOTIVATION OF POLISH SMALL TOWNS' AUTHORITIES FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Andrzej SZTANDO

Andrzej SZTANDO

Assistant professor, PhD,
Faculty of Economics Management and Tourism,
Wrocław University of Economics, Wrocław, Poland
Tel.: 0048-603-163.839
E-mail: andrzej.sztando@ue.wroc.pl

Abstract

The international literature offers a number of motives which should incline local authorities toward strategic planning of local development; it also emphasizes that they should be strongly motivated to do that. Meanwhile, their actual motivation for such planning can remain low and dominated by motives so far unrecognized in the literature. The article presents research confirming this assumption, conducted in 2014 among the authorities of Polish small towns.

The results reveal that the general motivation for strategic planning of local development among 37.7% of the authorities of Polish small towns is low. It also disclosed that the motive for obtaining means from the EU funds (so far unrecognized in literature) was and is motivating strongly at least 68.6% of these authorities for the discussed planning and, moreover, that it is a short-lived motive. The article indicates that this situation may also refer to other local authorities, not just the Polish ones. It also indicates that it is an unintended effect of the dependence of municipal development projects' support by the means from the EU funds on including them in the local development strategy. The final part of the article presents recommendations of actions to rectify such an unfavorable situation and for further studies of planning motives followed by local authorities.

Keywords: municipality, small town, local development, local development strategy, motives for the strategic planning of local development.

1. Local development

The concept of local development is frequently incorrectly or incompletely understood. Therefore the discussion about it must be preceded by its explanation. The category of local development is characterized by a dual nature and thus has to be perceived as the combination of two approaches.

The first approach to local development can be defined as a local one. It consists in perceiving this process as the desirable, positive, quantitative, qualitative and structural transformations of the local socio-territorial composition (the so-called local system), made up of the characteristic economic, spatial and cultural qualities, the social component of which expresses its own needs and the hierarchy of values (Sztando, 2013a, p. 239). Such a composition is identified in many countries with a municipality. The objective of local development, understood in this way, is to improve quality of life of a local community by meeting its needs along with generating useful values for the environment of the local system. Its other characteristics are as follows: strong, consensual reliance on endogenous factors, self-sustainability, long-term functioning, using of plans, subjectivity of the local community in defining its directions and in providing it, the absence of supra-local unification and compatibility with the idea of integrated order. Numerous approaches express such a perception of local development. The definition by Wojtasiewicz can serve as the example, according to which local development represents complex qualitative transformations covering the particular area in terms of its residents' living standards and the functioning of local economic bodies (Wojtasiewicz, 1990, p. 38). Marques also perceives local development in the analogic, local perspective claiming that local development represents a mobilization process of the local area actors involving innovations and aimed at achieving sustainable development, which harmonizes changes and is focused on increasing the opportunities available for population, economic growth, natural resources protection and social equality (Marques, 2009, p. 144).

The second option for approaching local development is of supra-local nature. Such perception means its conceptualization and identification in the scale of supra-local systems, i.e. regions, countries, unions of countries (e.g. EU), and also in the global scale. In a supra-local perspective it is perceived as the form of structures' transformations of the above-mentioned supra-local systems and also the relationships between these structures and their environment which, to a great extent, result from the local development processes occurring in the local systems made up of them. However, it is not just about the development processes taking place in many local systems and their effects to be combined into the supra-local, simple 'sums'. It is primarily about network interactions occurring among the local systems, and also between them and other supra-local entities (e.g. countries, companies, organizations) owing to which the existing and new supra-local, thus regional, national and global development processes were stimulated, protected and intensified.

In simplified terms, local development in a supra-local perspective signifies the transformation of local development processes into supra-local ones. The objective of

local development, understood in this way, is to improve life quality of supra-local societies. The supra-local approach towards local development is present, for example in the final part of the definition of Rezsóhazy (1988). He claims that local development represents both harmonized and systematic activity carried out in a local community along with the interested parties' participation, the results of which serve meeting the social needs of local population and result in the overall progress (Rezsóhazy, 1988, p. 17). The definition of Pietrzyk has similar fragments; according to her, local development is about contradicting extreme liberalism and the reconciliation between entrepreneurship and interpersonal solidarity, about solving problems related to market defects and imperfect information, about triggering social initiatives and taking advantage of the entire local potential of development, about the mobilization of local actors around their 'own' development program, and thus achieving synergy effects strengthening the general growth dynamics (Pietrzyk, 1997, pp. 89-90).

Due to the subject matter of this article its further parts will be devoted to local development perceived from the local perspective.

2. Strategic planning of local development and its motives and motivation indicated in the literature

In decentralized countries local authorities represent an entity creating local development in a local perspective. By taking advantage of the available set of informational, financial, educational, infrastructural, proprietary, diagnostic, as well as administrative compulsory instruments, they stimulate transformations of the local system structures, their mutual relations and their ties with the environment, so that they constitute local development. These activities are classified as one of the manifestations of modern public governance and most often referred to as local development governance.

High complexity represents one of its characteristics, as it refers to numerous social, economic and ecological processes. Moreover, it is performed in a variable, uncertain and frequently unfavorable interior of the local system and its environment. The conflict of interests represented by the local entities which co-create local processes, i.e. enterprises, NGOs, other public entities and citizens, also remain its complicating factor. Therefore, local authorities from different countries and the cooperating scientists investigate, test and apply diverse systemic approaches offering the improvement of both effectiveness and efficiency of the discussed activities. Strategic governance is one of them, which with regard to local development creation is referred to as the strategic governance of local development. In simplified terms, it consists in the cyclic process of strategic planning, the implementation of planned actions and finally the evaluation of implementation and its effects. The subject literature focuses primarily on the first stage, i.e. strategic planning. The collection of international scientific publications devoted to this type of planning is abundant (see e.g.: Carr-West, 2010; Caulfield and Schultz, 1989; Naschold and Daley, 1999; Gordon, 1993; Junjan, 2015; Nylehn, 1996; Pina, Torres and Yetano, 2011; Poister and Streib,

2005; Rodríguez-Pose and Tijmstra, 2010). It also includes Polish analyses, forecasts and guidelines (see e.g.: Bober, 2006; Domański, 1999; Gawroński, 2010; Kłosowski and Warda, 2001; Kot, 2003; Noworól, 2007; Sekuła, 2003; Swianiewicz, 2011; Wojtasiewicz, 1990).

The common component of the above-mentioned studies is the emphasis placed on the motives behind the discussed planning. These analyses provide reasons that its correct implementation along with the consecutive proper application allows, simplifies or improves:

- the identification of basic problems and development potentials within the local system;
- the identification of its key development opportunities and threats;
- the conceptualization of optimal attitudes against the above-mentioned determinants;
- the choice and focus on the projects most important for local development;
- timing and spatial coordination of these projects;
- integration of the local community around the vision and detailed concepts of local development;
- the establishment of strategic partnerships; and
- the evaluation of activities stimulating local development and their improvement.

These studies indicate that the discussed planning, in its final, overall effect, has a stimulating function for the local development. Thus, many of these studies emphasize that local authorities should be strongly motivated for the strategic planning of local development.

3. The research on the motives and motivation of Polish small cities authorities' for strategic planning of local development

3.1. Reasons, goals and the scope of research

In spite of potential advantages resulting from the strategic planning of local development, two situations were observed in Poland which proclaim that the motivation of some local authorities for such planning remains very low.

The first situation is that local authorities did formally adopt the local development strategy, and this strategy is formally in force, but since the date of its adoption a long period of time passed, even a dozen or so years, during which it became outdated. However, these authorities do not take up any activities to override it or update it or substitute it with a new one; they accept, ignore or remain unaware that the strategy in force is outdated and do not take any advantage of it (see e.g.: Sztando, 2016, p. 30). Such situation can be briefly defined as the 'out-of-date strategy situation'.

The second situation is that these authorities have never formally adopted any strategy, or did adopt it, however, it was later repealed without being replaced, or its legal validity expired. However, these authorities do not take up any activities to prepare

and adopt a new strategy. They accept or ignore that the local development strategy is non-existent (see e.g.: Katola, 2011, p. 57). Such situation can be briefly defined as the 'no strategy situation'.

Moreover, also in Poland, the situations were observed which confirm that some local authorities, while undertaking the strategic planning of local development, follow other motives than the ones indicated in the literature. One of them is the situation in which such authorities prepare a strategy mainly or exclusively in order to obtain the means from the EU funds for the implementation of diverse local projects. Having a strategy and including such projects in it used to be and still sometimes is the indispensable condition to apply for their financial support or the factor increasing chances to obtain it (see e.g.: Swianiewicz, 2011, p. 51). Such situation can be briefly defined as the 'for-EU-funds strategy situation'. In this situation other applications of the strategy usually fade into the background or are completely absent. Therefore, it does happen that 'for-EU-funds strategy situation' is followed by 'out-of-date strategy situation'. After taking advantage of the strategy to obtain the means from the EU funds, it is abandoned and its out-of-date status is allowed (see e.g.: Sztando, 2016, pp. 41-42).

The negative effect of the investigation of Polish¹ and international² scientific repositories conducted by the author (the content of all articles published since 1990 was reviewed, the titles or key words of which referred to local development strategy), allows concluding that the incidence of occurrence of the above-mentioned situations, in the environment of Polish or other local authorities, has neither been studied so far nor used for the identification of motives and the evaluation of motivation of these authorities for the strategic planning of local development. Such studies are, however, necessary. They can provide new knowledge about the actual structure of motives and the power of Polish local authorities' motivation for such planning. It can be used in improving the strategic planning of local development carried out in this country. Apart from practical application, the new knowledge will allow supplementing the lists of motives for strategic planning indicated in the literature and enriching this literature by information about the actual motivation of local authorities for such planning.

Having considered the above-mentioned rationale, the author conducted research of this type. The authorities of Polish small towns were selected as the research objects, since the new knowledge about their motives and motivation for the strategic planning of local development can support the improvement of current difficult situation of these towns. Nowadays a large number of Polish small towns are experiencing structural problems and facing either regression or stagnation. It is manifested by the decreasing population, unemployment, decapitalization of residential and factory

1 Library databases of all major Polish economic universities were checked.

2 Repositories checked: ScienceDirect, Directory of Open Access Journals, JSTOR®, Emerald, EBSCO, Wiley Online Library, The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics, CEEOL.

buildings, decapitalization of technical and social infrastructure, spatial disorder, the migration of enterprises and their capital, growth of crime, alcoholism and other social pathologies, reduction of residents' incomes, and also by other negative phenomena. At the same time, due to their low, own municipal budget revenues, as well as insufficient subsidies and grants from the state budget, the local authorities of these towns have not had the means at their disposal which could significantly change the described situation. These issues received a lot of coverage in Polish literature (see e.g.: Bartosiewicz, 2016). As such, two research goals were adopted:

- overall assessment of the scale of low motivation phenomenon, presented by today's local authorities of Polish small towns, for the strategic planning of local development, based on the information about the 'out-of-date strategy situation' and 'no strategy situation' occurrence; and
- overall assessment of the importance of obtaining means from the EU funds motive (hereinafter referred to as EU funds motive) for such authorities, in the aforementioned planning, based on the information about the past and present 'for-EU-funds strategy situation' occurrence and the occurrence of 'out-of-date strategy situation' after 'for-EU-funds strategy situation'.

Next, the research population was defined. Its presentation must be preceded by discussing the small town category, types of Polish municipalities, as well as the functioning of their authorities.

Small town is defined as spatially coherent, however, generically diversified relationship of local community and local economy, characterized by the specific socio-cultural, spatial, infrastructural and economic features, which distinguish it from rural settlements and medium-sized towns (Trutkowski and Mandes, 2005, p. 13). Different studies apply various methods to define which towns are included in this class. In the conducted research it was adopted that the number of residents of these towns ranges from 5,000 to 20,000. It was assumed that the lower limit of this range satisfactorily separates the towns characterized by too many rural features, whereas the upper satisfactorily separates medium-sized towns. This assumption was adopted also in other studies (e.g. Kok, 2013, p. 20; Rondinelli, 1990, p. 81).

When it comes to Polish municipalities, three types can be distinguished:

- rural municipalities which range from several to several dozen localities none of which is a town;
- urban-rural municipalities which are made up of a similar number of localities, however, one of them is a town; and
- urban municipalities which cover only one locality and this locality is a town.

The authorities of each Polish municipality, i.e. local authorities, consist of two cooperating bodies – the decision-making body and the executive one. A council represents the decision-making body and consists of several to several dozen members. It takes up the most important decisions regarding the municipality functioning in the form of resolutions, including the approval of local development strategy. The

municipal executive body is represented by one person, called mayor in small towns; the executive body prepares drafts of council resolutions, including draft of the strategy, and executes council resolutions using for this purpose both institutions and enterprises owned by a municipality, and also by entering into agreements with independent entities.

Therefore the research population consisted of the authorities of Polish towns (decision-making body and the executive one) representing urban municipalities or urban parts of urban-rural municipalities and meeting the above-mentioned quantitative criterion. The list of research population units was prepared at 31.12.2013 using the Local Data Bank³ of the state Central Statistical Office; the list included 369 authorities of small towns.

3.2. Strategic planning documents and resolutions about their adoption as the information sources on 'out-of-date strategy situation' and 'for-EU-funds strategy situation'

The strategic planning documents in force of the municipalities governed by the studied authorities and the resolutions about adopting them were chosen as sources of information about the 'out-of-date strategy situations' and 'for-EU-funds strategy situations'. In the period from 01.05.2014 till 31.05.2014 the total of 365 of such documents were collected (Table 1).

Table 1: Collected strategic planning documents formally adopted or prepared for adoption by the authorities of small towns

	Type of the strategic planning document			Lack of strategic planning document in force or its draft
	Local development strategy in force and the resolution about its adoption	LDP and the resolution about its adoption	Draft of the local development strategy in the final phase of its creation	
Number of collected strategic planning documents	315	31	19	4
	365			
Number of authorities of small towns	369			

Source: Author's compilation

315 local development strategies in force in May 2014 constituted the largest part of the collected documents; these were their latest versions, i.e. taking into account all changes – if any were performed.

Apart from the strategies in force, 19 drafts of local development strategies, in the final creation phase (final form and scheduled for adoption within 1-2 months) were collected. It was assumed that their adoption is so highly probable that they can already be considered as already applicable.

³ It is the base of data on social, economic, spatial and environmental characteristics of Polish municipalities, counties and regions.

In 31 cases local development plans (LDP) were collected instead of the local development strategies. LDPs appeared in Polish municipalities along with the national Integrated Operational Program of Regional Development 2004-2006 (OPRD). Possessing LDP was the prerequisite for municipalities to apply for investments funding means distributed within the framework of OPRD. It was required that LDP had a defined implementation period, included a diagnosis situation of the municipality, development objectives and a system of implementation. Despite OPRD finalization the usefulness of LDPs turned out to be much longer. Some local authorities got used to LDPs and started to treat them as useful tools for the strategic governance of local development. Therefore, LDPs were updated and improved, making them similar to the classical strategies of local development. Having taken it all into account, it was adopted that the LDP in force replaces the local development strategy if the strategy in force does not exist or it is older than LDP by at least eight years. The most recent LDPs were collected, i.e. taking into account changes introduced in their initial versions. Later in the article, LDPs and drafts of local development strategies, for simplification purposes, were frequently referred to as local development strategies or, in short, strategies.

3.3. The analysis of 'out-of-date/no strategy situations'

In order to determine in which part of small towns authorities the 'out-of-date strategy situation' currently occurs, the method of content analysis was applied. In the first stage of this analysis it was checked in which years the strategies were adopted or their latest update was performed and the obtained data were presented on a graph (Figure 1). It appeared that the significant part of the studied authorities have strategies which were developed or updated relatively long ago, even a dozen or so years before. For example, 46.6% (172 out of 369) of analyzed authorities had strategies the content of which was at least 8 years old, and 24.9% (92 out of 369) – at least 12 years old.

The above data suggested that a large part of the strategies in force represented the outdated ones, because their content ceased to reflect the existing determinants, social expectations and the foreseeable future of respective towns. The strategic planning of local development represents, however, a long-term planning which primarily covers the processes which are significantly changeable in a long-term perspective and projects possible to carry out in such period only. For this reason many researchers indicate that local development strategy should cover the implementation period from several to a dozen or so years (see e.g.: Poister and Streib, 2005, p. 46; Rodríguez-Pose and Tijmstra, 2010, pp. 55-56, 73; Noworól, 2007, pp. 109-116). Therefore, concluding about the occurrence of 'out-of-date strategy situation' solely based on the aforementioned information was considered wrong as one cannot exclude that even a dozen or so years old strategies are substantively up-to-date and utilized in local development governance.

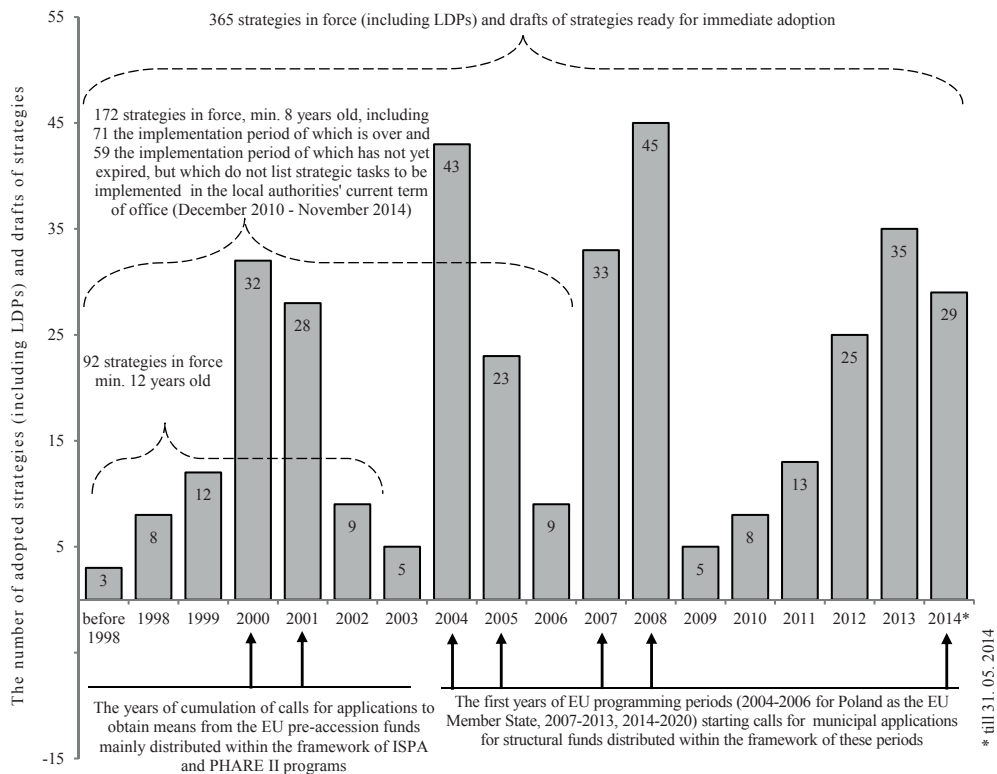


Figure 1: The number of local development strategies (including LDPs) of municipalities covering small towns, adopted in the particular years and in force on 31.05.2014 and drafts of such strategies ready on this day for immediate adoption

Source: Author's compilation

Taking it into account the information about a strategy 'age' was considered as preliminary one, other evidence confirming the 'out-of-date strategy situation' occurrence were investigated. The first evidence was considered upholding the strategy for which the implementation period was over. Therefore the second stage of content analysis consisted in checking what implementation periods were defined in the strategies. In this way it was revealed that the implementation periods of 20.8% (76 out of 365) strategies were already over (expired before May 2014). It was also found that 71 out of 76 such strategies were adopted before 2007, whereas 5 later (Figure 1).

Strategic tasks, i.e. substantive investment, organizational and other projects remain among the main components of a local development strategy, the implementation of which is supposed to result in achieving strategic goals. Some authorities define strategic tasks only for the first several years of the strategy implementation period; they do not define them for the latter years, recognizing it as too difficult and that it can be done later as a strategy update. However, such update is not always performed. It means that strategies, the implementation period of which has not yet expired, can be outdated in reality because they do not cover any strategic tasks to current implementation. In such strategies all the strategic tasks have already been

carried out, or their implementation was abandoned, or they are so delayed that they have to be rethought all over again.

Taking this into account, the third stage of content analysis was conducted, during which it was verified whether the strategies meet the criterion of containing strategic tasks assigned to current implementation, i.e. the implementation in any year of the local authorities' current term of office (December 2010 – November 2014). It was assumed that even if a strategy does not list strategic tasks assigned for implementation in 2014 (current year), but does include such tasks for at least one year of the current term of office, the implementation of these tasks can be delayed and they can be either currently or soon carried out. Local authorities can still be using such strategies. If the strategy did not meet the aforementioned criterion although its implementation period was not yet over, it was considered as the second proof for the occurrence of 'out-of-date strategy situation'. All strategies adopted since 2007 met this criterion, thus they were considered up-to-date. In case of 12 strategies adopted earlier it was not determined, because they did not provide the completion dates of strategic tasks. Given that one cannot exclude that some of these strategic tasks can be either currently or soon carried out, it was adopted that these strategies also meet the above-mentioned criterion. 59 strategies adopted before 2007 did not meet this criterion, thus they were considered as confirming the occurrence of 'out-of-date strategy situation' (Figure 1).

The second and third stage of the content analysis confirmed suggestions resulting from the first stage and jointly demonstrated that 'out-of-date strategy situation' occurs in at least 36.6% (76 + 59=135 out of 369) of Polish small towns' authorities, whereas in the vast majority of cases it results from an out-of-date status of the strategy adopted before 2007.

As far as the 'no strategy situation' is concerned it was considered that it occurs in four authorities, which represents approximately 1.1% (4 out of 369). In each of these cases no binding resolutions were found regarding either the strategy or LDP adoption.

3.4. The analysis of 'for-EU-funds strategy situations' and the subsequent occurrence of 'out-of-date strategy situations'

In order to determine in which part of small town authorities' the 'for-EU-funds strategy situation' occurred in the past, or is currently present, firstly the strategy content was searched for information (the fourth stage of content analysis) which explicitly stated that they were adopted primarily or exclusively to meet the prerequisites of calls for municipal applications to obtain means from EU funds (later referred to as evidentiary contents). Some authorities introduced such content into strategy in order to honestly inform what functions it actually performs, and to safeguard themselves against the allegations that it lacks the qualities necessary to carry out other functions. Including such information in the strategy was recognized as the first proof for the occurrence of 'for-EU-funds strategy situation'; such content was found in 10.4% (38 out of 365) strategies.

The majority of local authorities who adopt the strategy mainly or only in order to obtain the means from the EU funds do not, however, announce this fact. They fear allegations that the strategy should primarily play other functions, and they are not able to prepare the kind of strategy which could play these functions. They are also concerned that it can reduce their chances in applying for the means from the EU funds. For this reason it was decided to seek another satisfactorily credible proof for the occurrence of 'for-EU-funds strategy situation'. Simultaneous meeting two criteria by a strategy was considered as such evidence:

- including at least one element in the content suggesting that the key condition for strategic tasks implementation and, hence, achieving strategic goals is obtaining EU funds. Such contents (hereinafter referred to as suggesting contents) were considered as: indicating the EU funds as the most important opportunity for development of municipality; indicating the EU funds as the major financing source of strategy implementation; indicating the amounts obtained from the EU funds as the main basis for the assessment of strategy implementation.
- adoption (update) in the years of cumulation of calls for municipal applications to obtain means from the EU pre-accession funds, i.e. the years 2000-2001 (hereinafter referred to as the 'calls' cumulation years') or in the years starting the EU programming periods⁴, thus initiating preparations for calls and the actual calls of municipal applications to obtain means from the EU structural funds, i.e. the years 2004-2005, 2007-2008, 2014⁵ (hereinafter referred to as the 'calls' initiation years').

The content analysis (fifth stage) was used again to identify the suggesting contents (Table 2). The results of the first stage of content analysis were used to identify the years of strategies adoption (Figure 1). It turned out that 60 strategies were adopted in the years 2000-2001, of which 55 included the suggesting contents. These years featured the initiation of EU aid in adjusting Poland to the EU principles and increasing economic and social cohesion of Poland with the EU. Somewhat more, i.e. 66 strategies were adopted in the years 2004-2005, and 59 of them included the sought content. These years initiated the first, still incomplete period when Poland was taking advantage of the EU structural funds, however, following the same rules as the ones binding the other member states. The period 2007-2008 featured even more, i.e. 78 strategies, of which 72 included the suggesting contents. These years initiated the first full EU 2007-2013 programming period during which Poland was taking advantage of the EU structural funds. In the course of the first five months of 2014, which opened the subsequent EU 2014-2020 programming period, a total of 29 strategies were adopted or prepared for immediate adoption and all of them included the aforementioned contents.

4 These periods refer to the years: 2004-2006 (for Poland as the EU Member State), 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.

5 Until 31.05.2014 i.e. the day on which collecting strategies was finalised.

Thus, it turned out that in the calls' initiation years and in the calls' cumulation years 233 of strategies were adopted or prepared for immediate adoption, whereas 215 of them include contents suggesting that obtaining the means from the EU funds is the key condition for their implementation. Such strategies constituted 58.9% (215 out of 365) of all collected strategies.

Table 2: Local development strategies (LDPs) covering small towns, adopted in the selected periods and in force on 31.05.2014 and drafts of such strategies ready on this day for immediate adoption

Years of strategies (LDPs) adoption and drafts of strategies preparation for immediate adoption		Number of strategies (LDPs) in force on 31.05.2014 and drafts of strategies prepared for immediate adoption / their share in the overall number of collected strategies (LDPs) and drafts of strategies (%)	
		Total	including suggesting contents
Calls' cumulation years and calls' initiation years	2000-2001	60 / 16,4%	55 / 15,1%
	2004-2005	66 / 18,1%	59 / 16,2%
	2007-2008	78 / 21,4%	72 / 19,7%
	2014 (till May 31)	29 / 7,9%	29 / 7,9%
	the listed years jointly	233 / 63,8%	215 / 58,9%
Other years		132 / 36,2%	28 / 7,6%
All years jointly		365 / 100%	243 / 66,6%

Source: Author's compilation

The fourth and the fifth stage of content analysis, combined with the results of the first stage, showed jointly that the 'for-EU-funds strategy situation' occurred in the past or currently occurs in at least 68.6% (38 + 215=253 out of 369) of Polish small towns' authorities.

In the course of the last research stage the scale of 'out-of-date strategy situation' subsequent occurrence after 'for-EU-funds strategy situation' was verified. For this reason it was analyzed which part of the strategies considered as out-of-date and confirming the occurrence of 'out-of-date strategy situation' represent the strategies prepared mainly or exclusively to obtain the means from the EU funds and proving the occurrence of 'for-EU-funds strategy situation'. It turned out that it amounts to 87.4% (118 out of 135), which means the frequent occurrence of 'out-of-date strategy situation' after 'for-EU-funds strategy situation'.

4. Research conclusions

Firstly, the general motivation of at least 37.7% of Polish small towns' authorities for the strategic planning of local development is low. The research has proved that in this part of the authorities 'out-of-date strategy situation' (36.6%) or 'no strategy situation' (1.1%) currently occurs. This share is probably larger, but the research covered only the easy to identify, obvious evidence of strategy out-of-date status. In-depth studies would definitely confirm that part of the strategies considered as up-to-date are actually also out-of-date.

Secondly, the motive of the EU funds is strongly motivating or motivated at least 68.6% of the studied authorities for the discussed planning, however, it is a short-lived motive. The research has proved that 'for-EU-funds strategy situation' used to occur or currently occurs in at least that part of the analyzed authorities. In the periods of strategies adoption 'waves' more of them were adopted than identified in research, however, some of them were later repealed or replaced with the new ones. The number of such strategies was not possible to determine. The short-lived nature of this motive is confirmed by the fact that as many as 87.4% of the authorities in which 'out-of-date strategy situation' was identified represented the ones where 'for-EU-funds strategy situation' previously occurred.

5. Discussion

The research results allow concluding that there is a significant discrepancy (gap) between the guideline presented in the literature, regarding high motivation of all local authorities for the strategic planning of local development, and the strength of this motivation characteristic for major part of the authorities of Polish small towns. Moreover, the obtained results allow stating that the EU funds motive is an important motive of such planning, characteristic for the analyzed authorities, however, absent in the literature specifications of such motives. The results also indicate that after the occurrence of the EU funds motive the general motivation of the analyzed authorities for the discussed planning falls and the strategies are not used and becoming out-of-date. Therefore the research provided new and contradictory evidence to the subject literature knowledge about the motivation and motives for the strategic planning of local development carried out by the authorities of Polish small towns.

The research results also allow predicting future motivation of the studied authorities for the discussed planning. Polish GDP has been continuously increasing since 1992 and the economic and social cohesion of Poland with the most developed EU Member States is also growing. For this reason in the EU 2021-2027 programming period the financial support for Poland will be much lower than before. The EU funds motive will be less important, which reduces, even more, the general motivation of the authorities of Polish small towns for the strategic planning of local development; some of these authorities may totally abandon such planning.

The research results are also important for a larger field of the strategic planning of local development and constitute a warning for the national and EU authorities responsible for the distribution of EU funds.

Firstly, research results indicate that the activities focused on the popularization of such planning can result in counterproductive effects. The preconditions for having a strategy (LDP) and including a project in it, which is supposed to be supported by the EU funds, were introduced to promote discussed planning among the local authorities. These preconditions were also introduced to increase the probability that the project is a part of the planned, long-term, multi-dimensional, coordinated activities, also accepted by residents. In the situation of long-term and profound shortage of fi-

nancial means available for the local authorities it may result in this motive becoming a dominating one over other motives for the strategic planning of local development. That, indeed, happened in the environment of the studied authorities. They prepare strategies primarily or exclusively to apply for the means from the EU funds and do not intend to use them in any other way, thus after submitting an application they allow their continuous out-of-date status. All of this depreciates the idea of strategic planning of local development and reduces interest in its practical, entire application.

Secondly, it can be assumed that low motivation for strategic planning and high, although short-lived, importance of the EU funds motive also refers to other Polish local authorities. It may particularly concern the authorities of rural municipalities which function in similar conditions. It can also be assumed that a similar situation occurs in many local authorities from other European, post-communist countries. Many municipalities in these countries are also characterized by serious socio-economic problems, permanent underfunding and, at the same time, they benefit from the EU aid, the rules of which are analogical to the ones followed in Poland. This hypothesis is confirmed by the research covering Romanian local authorities (Hințea, Profiroiu and Țiclău, 2015). The significant gap between the theory and practice may thus refer to the much larger number of local authorities than those covered by the described research, and may have an international extent.

6. Recommendations

In light of the aforementioned findings, recommendations for the activities of public authorities and scientific circles should be presented, which in most cases are common. Firstly, it is necessary to diagnose the general motivation and importance of the EU funds motive in the strategic planning of local development carried out by the authorities of other Polish municipalities, and those from other CEE countries. It will allow a comprehensive identification of the scale, structure and spatial scope of the problems identified in this research. This recommendation primarily refers to the municipalities featuring low population numbers and low level of socio-economic development, i.e. the ones in which the EU funds motive can be very strong. It is worth extending this research by the identification of the importance of other motives for such planning, absent in the mainstream literature, however, recently signaled. Among them there are the motive of an executive body re-election, and the motive of vogue for strategic planning (see Sztando, 2013a; Sztando, 2013b).

Secondly, it is indispensable to take up activities in Poland to increase the general motivation of the analyzed authorities for the strategic planning of local development by upgrading the importance of planning motives identified in the subject literature. Such activities should cover continuous proliferation of knowledge among these authorities about practical, feasible benefits resulting from strategic planning, other than obtaining means from the EU funds. The theory has to be supported by case studies of these benefits' achievement by the municipalities experiencing a similar, difficult socio-economic situation. It is also necessary to implement state programs

facilitating substantive, long-term, individualized support for small towns' authorities in preparing and implementing their local development strategies. This support should be provided where the local development governance is carried out, i.e. in the seats of these authorities and directly to these authorities. Incidental, standardized support, addressed mainly to mid and low level municipal staff – performed so far – will not result in the desirable effect. If the above-mentioned research proves that the discussed problems occur in other Polish and foreign municipalities, they should be covered by analogical activities.

Thirdly, the discussed preconditions for the support of project by the means from the EU funds should be cancelled, i.e. the precondition of having strategy (LDP) by municipality and the precondition of including this project in it. Project should be evaluated only based on the data, and analyses referring directly to it and included in its documentation. The activities indicated in the previous paragraph will be more beneficial for the promotion of the strategic planning of local development. The listed conditions should also be abandoned there, where their introduction is being considered. Ukraine represents one of such countries. This country initiated its systemic reforms based on Polish self-government system as the reference model. By using Polish experience the Ukrainian authorities can avoid the problem of the EU funds or other aid funds motive domination and increase the general motivation of local authorities for the strategic planning of local development.

The final, fourth recommendation refers to public governance science, and within its framework, the knowledge about local development governance. So far, the lists of motives for the strategic planning of local development presented in the literature included only the desirable motives of such planning. However, these lists should consist of two subgroups of motives: the desirable and the undesirable ones, and the studies covering undesirable motives should be continued.

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