

Specialities in the institutionalization of Hungarian LEADER local action groups

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Theme: C. Developing Rural and Peripheral Regions

Key words: rural development, institutionalization, LEADER, local governance, post-socialist

Bottom-up socio-economic rural development programs are globally spread. In the EU the 25 years long history of the LEADER program is declared a success story by official evaluations and many independent authors as well.

In parallel with the enlargement process countries of the former Communist Block also started to establish LEADER-like programmes. In the 2007-2013 period LEADER local action groups became regular actors of the post-socialist rural landscape. Hungary was one of the forerunners in LEADER establishment in Eastern Central Europe. Although LEADER principles were respected in the implementation process, some contradictory phenomena also had an effect on LAG formation.

In our article institutionalization is interpreted according to the theory of Anssi Paasi. Some anomalies will be highlighted concerning the institutionalization process of three generations of Hungarian action groups. Accordingly four phases will be examined: territorial form, symbolic shape, institutional constellation and established role.

Beyond basic statistic data relating to the size/population/number of LAG members/ etc. of different action groups, additional information were gathered from the text of integrated rural development plans. Through text analysis some details of symbolic shape could be highlighted.

Results can contribute to the reading of local governance in a post-socialist and highly centralized country. Recent processes of CLLD development (2014-2020) in Hungary could harness some achievement of the project.

This paper was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship (BO/00542/13/10) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.