

Co-production of public services on rural areas – the Polish way?

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Aim of presented research:

The purpose of this paper is to present the structure of sołectki fund as a solution that promotes governance and co-production of public services, as well as to analyse the use of this tool by urban-rural communes in Poland in the years 2014-2017.

According to OECD's definition, co-production is “a way of planning, designing, delivering and evaluating public services which draws on direct input from citizens, service users and civil society organisations”.

It can be noticed that co-production may be understood as **”simple input into service delivery (e.g. feedback on services)”** or **“extensive and enduring relationships with service users”**

The administrative division of Poland separates commune (GMINA) as the basic unit of territorial division and its authorities implement the majority of public tasks of a local nature.

The legislator envisaged the possibility of creating **auxiliary units** in the form of **sołectwo**, in the rural areas of communes.

Sołectwo is a **non-obligatory auxiliary unit** of the urban-rural or rural commune that is created in order to implement this part of own tasks of the commune, which **due to the limited territorial scope** are specific for the given sołectwo.

The sołectki fund means a pool of funds guaranteed in the commune budget for the sołectwo, for the implementation of undertakings that are aimed at improvement of the living conditions of its residents.

Three conditions must be fulfilled cumulatively:

- (1) the submitted task must be own task of the commune,
- (2) it must be conducive to the improvement of the living conditions of the residents,
- (3) it must be compliant with the commune's development strategy.

This is a form of the co-production of public services, because the residents themselves, in addition to participation in the consultation process (participation, co-governance), can participate in the co-production of public services thanks to the direct engagement in their creation (own work, co-creation).

The research included all communes with urban-rural status in 2017 - 621 units (commune that covered the area of at least one city and surrounding villages). The time range covered the years 2014-2017 and the communes for which data was available in the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office (CSO)

The basic research method consisted of statistical analysis of the data made available in the Local Data Bank (CSO) concerning the scale and directions of expenses of the examined communes within sołeczki funds.

Results of study

Percentage of communes that implemented expenses within the framework of SF in the years 2014-2017 and percentage of communes that implemented expenses from the SF in the main sections of budgetary classification

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total	66.34%	72.30%	76.17%	79.39%
Transport and communication	88.11%	87.97%	88.79%	90.47%
Housing	18.69%	21.83%	27.70%	24.14%
Public safety and fire protection	54.37%	57.91%	60.89%	64.50%
Educational services	31.55%	32.29%	31.71%	32.25%
Municipal management and environmental protection	80.58%	83.52%	85.84%	88.24%
Culture and protection of national heritage	85.19%	86.64%	87.32%	86.41%
Physical culture	69.66%	72.61%	71.67%	74.44%

Share of expenses by the sections of budget in the total amount of expenses within the SF

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017
Transport and communication	30.70%	29.40%	28.60%	28.60%
Housing	2.50%	2.60%	2.90%	2.60%
Public safety and fire protection	4.40%	4.60%	4.20%	4.40%
Educational services	1.80%	2.00%	1.70%	1.90%
Municipal management and environmental protection	15.30%	15.80%	17.00%	17.80%
Culture and protection of national heritage	29.80%	29.70%	29.70%	28.20%
Physical culture	8.10%	8.90%	9.70%	10.30%

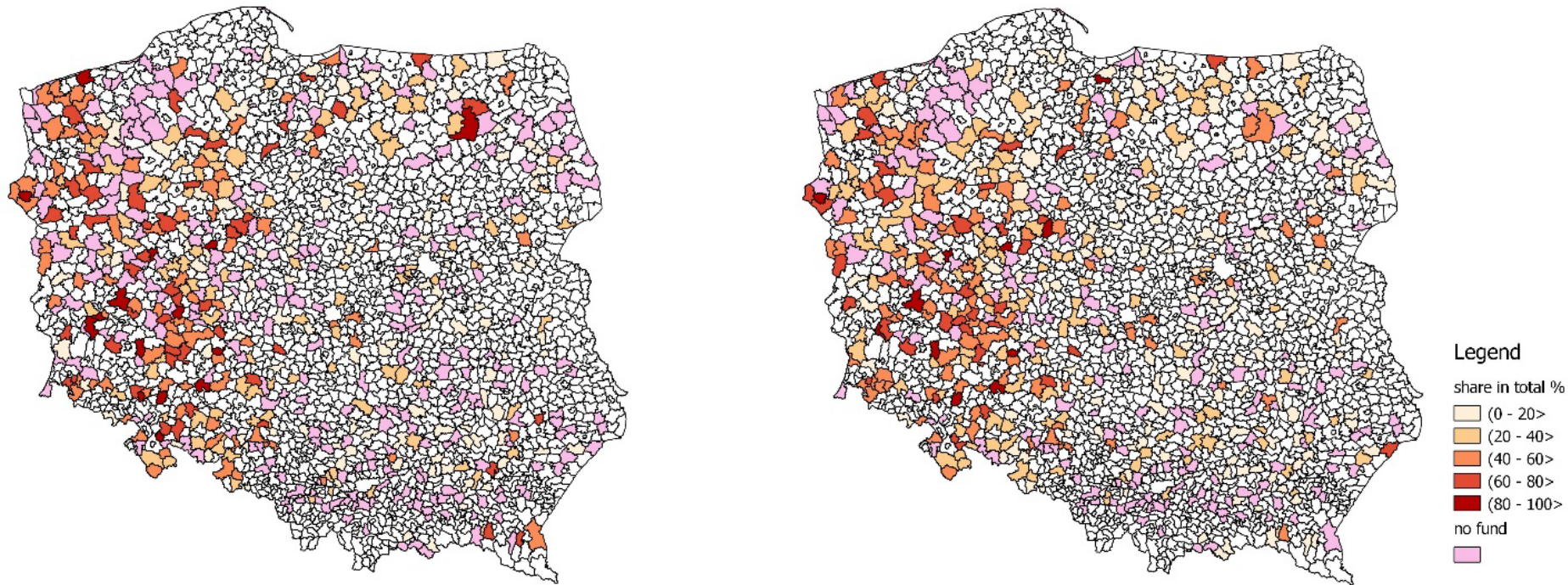
*Share of expenses within the sołectki funds in 2014 (left)
and 2017 (right) in the researched communes in the total
current expenses*



Share of expenses in the section of transport and communication within the sołectki funds in 2014 (left) and 2017 (right) in the researched communes



Share of expenses in the section of culture and protection of national heritage within the sołectki funds in 2014 (left) and 2017 (right) in the researched communes



1. The scale of the use of sołeczki funds in Poland significantly increased and as much as 80% of communes started (or continued) to use the sołeczki funds.
2. Five main areas of spending, five can be distinguished, which reflect the main needs of residents reported to communes in the area of improving the quality of life within the individual communes.
3. Due to the scale of expenses, three of the above-mentioned directions of spending dominate here (Transport, culture and management)
4. It can be noticed that there is a strong diversification of directions of the sołeczki funds' expenses between the regions.

1. It is not possible to indicated the reasons for such differences between the regions without further in-depth research.
2. Another issue is the lack of possibility to assess the degree of co-production of public services, due to the lack of a system for monitoring and collecting data regarding this topic.
3. It can be assumed that studies concerning the co-production processes within the sołectki funds may constitute a significant contribution to the development of new public governance theory, however this will require the research on the scope of citizens' participation in decision making, provision of public services, as well as reasons that they are guided by.

Thank You for attention.

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