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LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND NGO'S NETWORK COOPERATION: LITHUANIAN EVIDENCE

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The article analyses the cooperation between municipal administration and NGO's. The methodology of the present research is based on the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. During the current research, the municipal administration and NGO's representatives were interviewed and surveyed. The questionnaires were developed based on Mandell and Keast's characteristics of network collaboration. According to the research findings the difference between the Kretinga district municipality and the Klaipėda city in a network cooperation is not so great. Both municipalities reveal to be the less than the average coordination network type.

Key words: governance; Lithuania; local government; network cooperation; non-governmental organization.

СЕТЕВОЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО МЕЖДУ ОРГАНАМИ МЕСТНОГО САМОУПРАВЛЕНИЯ И НЕПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННЫМИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯМИ: ЛИТОВСКИЙ ОПЫТ

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Анализируется вопрос сотрудничества между местными самоуправлениями и неправительственными организациями. Методология исследования основывается на комбинации количественных и качественных методов. Изучение проведено посредством опроса и интервьюирования представителей местного самоуправления и неправительственных организаций. Анкеты количественного исследования подготовлены на основе характеристик сетевого сотрудничества, установленных Манделл и Кестл. Сделан вывод о том, что разница в объеме сетевого сотрудничества между Клайпедским самоуправлением и Кретингским самоуправлением незначительная. В обоих местных учреждениях меньше, чем в среднем, выявлены типы координационных сетей.

Ключевые слова: Литва; местное самоуправление; неправительственные организации; сетевое сотрудничество; государственное управление.

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Introduction

In order to modernize the public governance in the XIX century, more attention is paid to the *network cooperation* as a form of the inter-organizational interactions. We can see the growing application of the *network cooperation* worldwide what means this form to be one of the best among the other forms of inter-organizational cooperation. Networks provide new opportunities for organizations to work together and achieve common goals. The importance of network cooperation in public management is undeniable, so this paper **aims** to assess *network cooperation* of the Kretinga district's and the Klaipeda city municipal administrations and the respective districts' NGOs. In order to reach the aim, the paper is structured into the three main parts.

First of all, in the process of assessing *network cooperation* of municipal administration and NGOs it is necessary to review the theoretical aspects of network cooperation, examine the importance of NGOs in public governance as well as to present the regulation of

the NGOs and the public sector in Lithuania. After the review of the theoretical aspects of the network cooperation, the model for the cooperation network assessment is created.

The second part of the paper, therefore, presents the creation of the model as a new analytical tool for the analysis of cooperation between the municipal administration and the NGOs: the indices system is composed which allows indicating and assessing the predominant type of the network, aftermath it is possible to project future scenarios for the most suitable cooperation network type. According to this model the questionnaire is prepared for the survey/research.

The third part of the paper presents the results of the survey, conducted at the Kretinga district and the Klaipeda city municipalities. The survey included the representatives of the municipal administrations and the respective NGOs'. The insights obtained during the investigation complements the interpretation of the data.

Theoretical background

Contemporary society will definitely chase the history as a network society (or *network era*). The complexity of relations among different (societal) bodies (stakeholders), however, should be dealt (up) with nowadays. Amid the literature providing for different networks' research angles and different solutions one can find the questions of **collaboration** analyzed. While the paradigmatic shift of public administration towards the *New Public Management* (NPM) opened the doors for the "outers" willing to participate in the public affairs, several decades had to pass while trying to find the suitable evaluation and performance indicators (measures). A strong emphasis of the emergent doctrine of *Public Governance on the network* as the main power serves as a perfect background for assessment of the inter-organizational cooperation [1, p. 542; 2, p. 549; 3, p. 33–35; 4, p. 234–235].

The essence of any (administrative/public) network consists of a simple idea that governmental agencies are no longer able alone to deal with (to cope with) the complex variety of public issues. Different stakeholders should be involved in the processes. Different stakeholders with different NGOs amongst should be and are willing to be involved in these processes. The question of NGOs' participation (involvement) is not that simple due to the patchy entity of the former. NGOs differ. Banks and Hulme [5] polarizes between those (almost 90 %) "working towards mutual goals in service and welfare provisions" and those (less than 10 %) trying their success "in advocacy and empowerment". While the former being as a clear example of the spread of the NPM the later is the growing outcome of the *governance* debate. The emergent *network*

era particularly challenges NGOs to become active "in advocacy and empowerment". Despite this might confront with the closed nature of local and national governments, nonetheless, the growing pressure from the society leads to the growing need to elaborate effective *collaboration networks*.

We still lack any more serious attempts to evaluate (or assess) the interaction between the local municipal administrations and the respective NGOs.

Involvement of NGOs into the processes of service delivery and policy actions/decisions amplifies outspreads from the broader *network paradigm*. While all the authors in unison talk about *network* as "a third alternative between top-down planning and the anarchy of the market" [6, p. 31], simplicity falls under an illusion. As Keast [7, p. 15–23] defines, specifically in public sector administration one can trace three interrelated strands of networking (or network theorizing): namely, the *Network Theory*, the *Inter-organizational Networks*, and the *Policy, Governance and Public Management Networks* (the later being split into the *Implementation Structures and Service Networks*, and the *Governance Network Theory*). As *networks* are always about *the nodes* and *the ties* (or links, linkages), all the theorizing attempts differ according their focus of attention. Despite the tangled up research objects of these strands, attempts to assess the interaction between local municipal administrations and NGOs fall under the theorizing of the *Implementation Structures and Service Networks*. Being originated from the studies of inter-organizational relations, research of the *Implementation Structures and Service Networks* focuses namely on the development of various network typolo-

gies ranging from the *policy network* to the *network management and performance*. As *networks* are always about *the nodes* and *the ties* the focus of attention, thus, falls over *the ties* and *their management*.

Proponents of the strand understand networks as multilevel phenomena [8, p. 448; 9, p. 73; 10, p. 479]. Putting away the intro-organizational networking questions, the authors focus on inter-organizational relations. Network, therefore, serves, on the one hand, as an umbrella term to define all the possible contemporary relations among different nodes (i. e., various participative actors, organizations as well). On the other hand, network (by some authors) is understood as a particular type (among broad variety of the other types) of the relations among nodes. (The former could be called as a macro-level type, while the later as a micro-level type.) Mandell and Steelman [10, p. 202] define the last (i. e., micro-level type) networks as

a part of *inter-organizational innovations*: some horizontally arranged agreements, involving “at least two or more actors” as well as including “participants from the public, private, non-profit sectors, as well as community groups, with varying degrees of interdependence to accomplish goals that otherwise could not be accomplished independently” and “they provide the foundation upon which more innovative solutions can develop”. Grounding on the works by Agranoff and McGuire [11], Agranoff [12], Agranoff [13], Mandell [14], and Milward and Provan [15], the authors synthesize all “of definitions referring to various inter-organizational innovations” into five different types:

- intermittent coordination;
- temporary task force;
- permanent and/or regular coordination;
- a coalition;
- a network structure [14, p. 203–204].

Research methodology

The present research employs the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. On the basis of the quantitative research method, calculations are performed with the aim to investigate the values of the network cooperation index. Indices values increase the value of a quantitative research. On the basis of the quantitative method, the research aims at interpreting the indices values, provides the conclusions of the research, and indicates the perspectives of network collaboration.

Research sample

Kretinga district municipality administration. The research aims at interviewing the employees of the Kretinga district municipality administration, i. e. one employee from each of the 19 departments. Almost all department representatives of Kretinga district municipality communicated willingly and filled in the questionnaire. Twelve representatives of administration departments were interviewed directly. The representative of one department strictly refused to answer the questions and explained that he did not have time and did not have any relation to NGOs. It was not possible to talk to the representatives of the other departments directly; therefore, the questionnaires were emailed to the heads of six departments (a variant of the questionnaire in MS Word document). Four departments replied very quickly and returned the questionnaires filled in, while two departments did not reply. Thus, 19 questionnaires were provided to the departments of Kretinga district municipality administration; 16 of them were filled in, which makes 84 %.

Klaipėda city municipality administration. The structure analysis of Klaipėda City Municipality Administration has revealed that the administration is composed of 6 divisions and 27 subdivisions; in addition, there are twelve subdivisions in this administration which do not

belong to any division. As Klaipėda City Municipality Administration is especially large, a decision has been made to base the research on the activity areas of Kretinga Region Municipality Administration; therefore, when analyzing the functions of Klaipėda City Municipality Administration divisions and subdivisions, 17 divisions and subdivisions have been selected, which at least partly correspond to the functions of Kretinga Region Municipality Administration. Thus, certain divisions and subdivisions have been included to the sample of Klaipėda City Municipality Administration with the aim to represent both Kretinga Region Municipality Administration and Klaipėda City Municipality Administration proportionally according to their activity area. Klaipėda City Municipality Administration has been investigated using a questionnaire on the website www.apklausa.lt. As Klaipėda City Municipality Administration is especially closed, a member of Klaipėda City Municipality Council had to mediate. An online questionnaire method has been chosen in order to facilitate the mediation process so that the member of the City Council could send the link to the questionnaire to the Heads of divisions and subdivisions. Thus, the member of the Municipality Council sent the link to the online questionnaire to the indicated 17 representatives of the administration. The return rate of the questionnaire is seven questionnaires (i. e., 41 %).

Non-governmental organizations in the Kretinga district. The formation of the NGOs sample was more complicated. Non-governmental organizations are not registered to a NGO data base; therefore, it is not known exactly how many non-governmental organizations there are which are registered or operating in Lithuania or in a certain municipality. Thus, the final sample is not known and it is not possible to determine an exact NGO sample. As this problem was faced, the

contacts of NGOs were searched using various sources. NGO contacts in Kretinga district were searched with the help of NGO coordinator, who indicated that all NGO contacts are provided on the website of Kretinga district municipality accessed at www.kretinga.lt. This website provides the contacts of 32 communities, 49 sports clubs, 17 youth organizations or the organizations which work with youth, and 27 miscellaneous organizations. In total, 125 non-governmental organizations were found. Not all of them provide their emails in the above-mentioned website; therefore, some emails were collected using personal acquaintances. The NGOs in Kretinga district were sent the questionnaires by email as this way is the most convenient and it requires the least time and financial resources. The research participants had to mark the option which is the most suitable and to send the questionnaire back. In total, 125 questionnaires were sent to NGOs in Kretinga district; 20 of the questionnaires (17 %) were returned.

Non-governmental organizations in the Klaipėda city. The contacts of Klaipėda city NGOs have been collected with the help of a member of Klaipėda City Non-Governmental Organizations Council. The member of the NGO Council has indicated that there is no database of Klaipėda City NGOs and that the Council is trying to collect this data. In addition, the member of the NGO Council has claimed that only Klaipėda Youth Organizations Association “Round Table”, which unites youth organizations, has collected data about youth NGOs in Klaipėda city. In total, 29 youth and working with youth organizations have been found, using the website of “Round Table”. Other organizations have been found on the website www.3sektorius.lt; out of 89 NGOs provided on the website and registered in Klaipėda city, 62 NGOs have been chosen for the present research (other NGOs are not suitable because they do not provide their contact information or have already been included into the present research). In order to find the contacts of sports NGOs, the search system www.google.lt has been used. In total, 18 sports NGOs have been found which provide their e-mails. In total, 112 NGOs have been found in Klaipėda city. It is important to stress that there are no citizens’ communities in Klaipėda city; there are only Community Councils established in conformity to the order of the Administration Director. The NGOs of Klaipėda city have been investigated using

a questionnaire on the website www.apklausa.lt. In total, 112 questionnaires have been sent; their return rate is 20 questionnaires (i. e., 18 %).

Interpretation of the research sample. As can be seen from the data, the return of the questionnaires filled in by the municipality administration comprises a larger percentage; however, only a small part of the NGOs agreed to participate in the research actively. As Banks and Hulme [5] already mentioned above claim, impact NGOs usually comprise approximately 10 % of all NGOs; therefore, 17–18 % can be viewed as sufficiently representative.

Research instrumentarium

For the present research, the questionnaires were developed based on Mandell and Keast’s [16, p. 575–597] characteristics types of network collaboration. An assumption was formulated that the most desirable type of the three network collaboration characteristics is the collaborative network type. Based on the characteristics criteria of network collaboration types, research questions were formulated, which reflect the essence of each criterion. It was aimed that the answer to each question would reflect the network type identified by the respondent, depending on the present situation. Thus, the questions had three possible answer variants, which defined the three types of networks. For the analysis of the data, the several-stage strategy of was applied: 1) first, the percentage was calculated; 2) second, the values of indices were calculated. Figure 1 provides the interval system of indices. In this case, the interval score is important, which demonstrates the variation between network types. The interval part from 0 to 2 is appointed to the coordination network; the interval from 2.1 to 4 is assigned to the cooperation network; and the interval from 4.1 to 6 indicates the collaboration network.

It is important to emphasize that coordination networks have the lowest score because, as indicated in the theoretical sources, they are the expression of the lowest network collaboration, and in certain aspects there may not be any collaboration at all. As indicated in the theoretical sources, collaboration networks are presented as collaboration networks of medium strength. Furthermore, collaboration networks are presented as especially close networks of network collaboration, which are viewed as an aspiration.

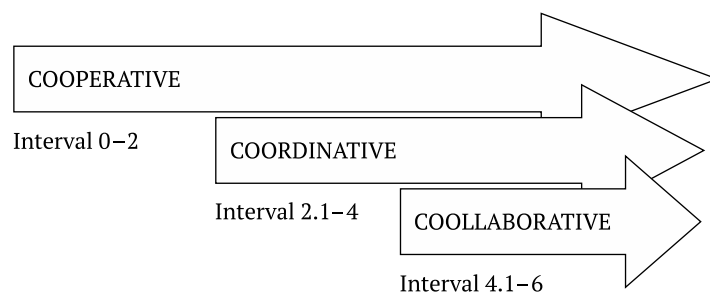


Fig. 1. Intervals of the network collaboration index (developed by the authors)

Research results

As it was described in the part of the research methodology, first of all, we calculated the percentage of the respondents' answers. The distribution of the answers is presented in the tables 1 and 2.

The results (see table 1) reveal that the level of **trust** is evaluated as average in both municipalities. Nonetheless, the level of inter-organizational trust in the Kretinga district municipality is slightly bigger than that of the Klaipėda city. What concerns the **communication bandwidth**, the respondents of the survey are sure about the rare/occasional intensity of inter-organizational communication (communication happens on the demand). **Information sharing** is treated as average in both municipalities. **Aims** reveal to be more inter-dependent between the Klaipėda City Municipality's Administration and the respective NGOs than between the Kretinga district municipality's administration and the respective NGOs. It means that cooperation/col-

laboration in forming common **aims** is more often in the Klaipėda city municipality. What concerns the **resource allocations**, the respondents of the survey in almost unison state the financial support (resources) is provided only for the specialized activities (projects) and not permanently. Summary of the **cooperation duration** indicator shows cooperation among the administration and the NGOs to be more intense and happen more often (periodically) in the Kretinga district municipality. **Commitment orientation and accountability** reveals all the respondents are totally accountable only to their respective units (administration to administration, NGO to NGO). Finally, in the table 2 the results for the **activities** evaluation are presented. According the percentage of all the answers, it is visual that the administration of the Klaipėda city municipality and the respective NGOs hold more common activities than those in the Kretinga district.

Table 1

Distribution of the respondents' answers, %

No.	Characteristics	Kretinga district NGOs	Kretinga district municipality administration	Klaipėda city NGOs	Klaipėda City Municipality Administration
1	<i>Trust</i>				
	Low	19	12	33	29
	Average	67	75	48	71
	High	14	13	19	0
2	<i>Communication bandwidth</i>				
	Rare	19	19	19	43
	Rare or occasional (on the requirement)	62	44	48	43
	Often	19	37	33	14
3	<i>Information sharing</i>				
	Rare	38	13	29	28,5
	Average (on purpose)	52	56	57	43
	Very often	10	31	14	28,5
4	<i>Aims</i>				
	Aims are independent	53	56	33	43
	Aims are half-dependant	33	25	48	28,5
	Shared aims	14	19	19	28,5
5	<i>Resources</i>				
	No resources	19	56	43	29
	Resources for special activities (projects only)	67	44	43	57
	Permanent resources	14	0	14	14
6	<i>Cooperation duration</i>				
	Short-termed	33	62	38	43
	Periodical	24	19	29	43
	Permanent	43	19	33	14

Ending table 1

No.	Characteristics	Kretinga district NGOs	Kretinga district municipality administration	Klaipėda city NGOs	Klaipėda City Municipality Administration
7	<i>Commitment orientation and accountability</i>				
	To the represented unit	62	88	62	86
	To the represented unit and the other	38	6	38	14
	To the other and the represented unit	0	6	0	0

Table 2

Distribution of the respondents' answers, %

Activities	Organization	Variants of answers				
		Very often (5)	Often (4)	Average (3)	Rare (2)	Never (1)
Unified (common) activities on demand	Kretingos raj.	4,7	22,1	33,9	22,1	17,2
	Klaipėdos m.	12,1	31,8	27,2	28,9	0
Coordinated policy for activities	Kretingos raj.	0	11	40,9	23,7	24,4
	Klaipėdos m.	9,7	0	32,1	48,5	9,70
No united activities at all	Kretingos raj.	0	5,5	40,2	19,7	34,6
	Klaipėdos m.	11,9	11,9	14,3	45,2	16,7
Unified activities	Kretingos raj.	9,5	7,2	24,4	25,1	33,8
	Klaipėdos m.	0	19,6	39	21,4	20

While summarizing and analyzing all the results it is possible to conclude that relation between the administration and the NGOs differs in both municipalities. The more intense level of trust, communication bandwidth, and information share is inspected in the Kretinga district municipality. However, the Klaipėda city municipality reveals to have the more intense level of aims (share), resource allocation, and

cooperation duration. These results do not show all the picture of the research. It is necessary, therefore, to perform the second step of the research.

The second part of the research is devoted for the summarizing of the results revealed through the survey. The finalized indices' values with the network's characteristic descriptions of the both municipalities are presented in the table 3 below.

Table 3

Final indices

No.	Inter-organizational cooperation	Kretinga district municipality		Klaipėda city municipality	
		Index value	Network's characteristic	Index value	Network's characteristic
1	Trust	2,93	Average coordination	2,35	Weak coordination
2	Communication bandwidth	3,28	Strong coordination	2,28	Weak coordination
3	Information share	2,85	Average coordination	2,78	Average coordination
4	Activities	2,11	Week coordination	2,55	Average coordination
5	Aims	1,87	Cooperation	2,57	Average coordination
6	Resources	2,23	Weak coordination	2,35	Weak coordination
7	Cooperation duration	2,2	Weak coordination	2,5	Week coordination
8	Commitment and accountability	0,85	Cooperation	0,78	Cooperation
<i>Total</i>		<i>2,29</i>	<i>Weakly expressed coordination form</i>	<i>2,35</i>	<i>Weakly expressed coordination form</i>

Note. Authors' own calculations.

According the data presented in the table 3, difference between the Kretinga district municipality and the Klaipėda city is not very big. Both munici-

palties reveal to be the less than the average coordination network type (weakly expressed coordination form).

Conclusions

Nowaday various forms of network cooperation become main public management tool that encourage close interorganizational cooperation. There described an exploratory model of network cooperation, that provides an opportunity to assess the situation and possibilities of cooperation between local government administration and non-governmental organization. All to all during the research we identified the prevailing forms and cooperation perspectives of network cooperation.

According to the research data and obtained indices found that both Kretinga district and Klaipėda

city municipalities cooperation with NGO's is similar. Though different dimensions were analyzed – district and city. The developing of network cooperation is necessary condition for cooperation from both sides: municipality administration and NGO's representatives. The preparation of inter-organizational cooperation programme may strength between the both sides. In this perspective the cooperation between municipalities administration and NGO's from coordinative network will due to other dimension – collaborative network.

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