



Concrete examples of local development

Workshops held in Poland on the long-term vision for rural areas clearly indicated that development in rural areas – though often reliant on regional investments and infrastructure – comes from local initiatives: individuals, NGOs, businesses, local government trigger and bring to fruition new ideas.

We supplement the presentation of visions expressed by leaders in local and rural development in late 2020 and early 2021 with recent examples of initiatives that illustrate some of the themes brought up during discussions. This is a selection of the initiatives that the Polish Rural Network is aware of, though there are bound to be more in existence.

Thematic villages

Rural development experts have pointed to thematic villages as a way to promote the Polish countryside. They can, they attract school classes and city dwellers in search of adventure, they allow for use of modern technologies such as audio guides, quests, geocaching, and social gardens. They can revive the rural economy, integrate residents and provide an alternative income.

Local initiatives involving the idea of thematic villages already exist. They rely on local inhabitants coming together, sharing their ideas and making the best of their village's strengths. The workshops on the long-term vision for rural areas highlighted the importance of the LEADER initiative to bring such ideas to light and bring them to life. We present two such initiatives here.



Project: The Village of Stone and Sand – geo-tourism as a way to growth based on social enterprise

Czapple is a small provincial village in Lower Silesia with about 200 inhabitants. Most of them are young people. The challenge was to stop young village inhabitants leaving, to find a way for them to earn a living without traveling to the city. The challenge was addressed by setting up a thematic village based on local geological resources (sandstone, gravel) as a tourist attraction.

Many ideas were shared in village meetings. Attractions based on geo-tourism were proposed and implemented, increasing the village's attractiveness and bringing in individual tourists and organized groups. Czapple now boasts:



- a walk on the bottom of the Cretaceous Sea,
- an exhibition of rocks and minerals from the Land of Extinct Volcanoes Geopark, and
- features using sandstone landscaping elements and resting places.

Added value: The thematic village stimulates and introduces the social economy to the village. Residents have been hired as guides. Up-to-date technologies are used, including audiobooks and a social garden. Residents cooperated with multiple entities: the Heron Foundation, the Partnerstwo Kaczawskie Local Action Group, the local government in Pielgrzymka, local entrepreneurs (gravel and sandstone mines), and an expert from the Polish Geological Institute.

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Project: The mining village of lignite

The Association of Residents and Friends of Piła BUKO established a social enterprise to run the Mining Village in Gostycyn. The enterprise employs local residents. As part of the project a historic wooden mining tower (9m high) and a fragment of the Montana underground lignite mine shaft (5 m deep) from the 19th century were reconstructed.



Added value: The Mining Village has increased tourism with impacts on development and economic benefits for the inhabitants. The use of revitalized historic buildings improves the inhabitant's identification with their own history, heritage and culture. A digital visualization of the reconstructed object was created. The project is an inspiration to take action based on unique items of historical and cultural resources of the Polish countryside. The project is the result of cooperation between various stakeholders: the Provincial Conservator of Monuments, a group of volunteers living in the village, the Bory Tucholskie Local Action Group and a network of thematic villages to which the BUKO Association belongs. The project was included in the Golden Collection of good practices related to the European Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century ("Strategy 21").

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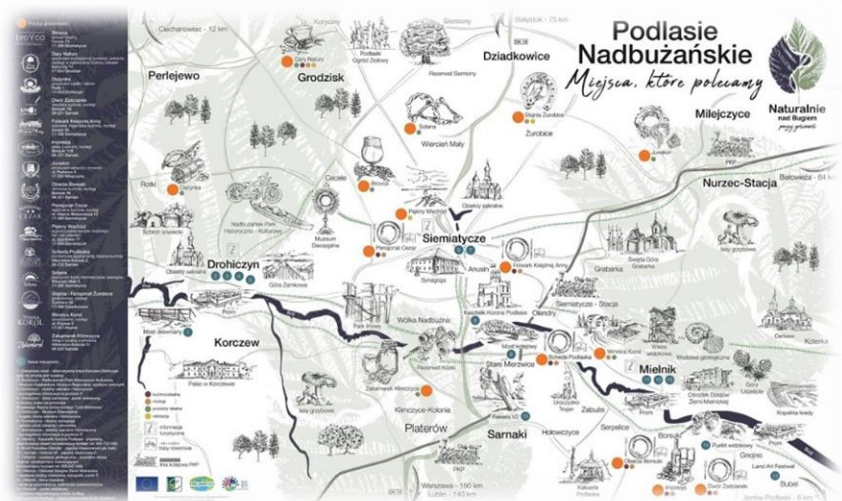
Creating rural brands, creating local "hubs" with the use of modern technologies, sustainable production, supporting domestic business

Rural development depends not just on local citizens and NGOs undertaking social initiatives. Rural development must involve and include the concerns of farmers. This can involve Local Action Groups, but it can just as often involve Operational Groups – projects supported as part of the Cooperation Measure under Rural Development Programmes. These projects aim to support innovative business ideas of farmers, researchers, entrepreneurs, agricultural advisors and others keen to support economic development and innovation in farming.



Project: Creating a network of mutual cooperation within short supply chains of local products and services

The lack of attractive and effective tools to support the sale of local services and products promoting the Podlasie Nadbużańskie region, limited the possibilities of reaching customers, and therefore profiting and developing business. That is why the Tygiel Doliny Bugu LAG, operating in the area of two voivodeships, took steps to unite entrepreneurs and local producers for cooperation under a common brand to achieve common goals.



A cooperation network was created, connecting 15 entrepreneurs who promote each other's services or products. The joint trademark "Naturalnie nad Bugiem – feel hospitality" was developed – a promotion system that allowed to increase the recognition and income of all entities in the network. The entrepreneurs include owners of restaurants, agritourism farms, local wine and beer producers, producers of regional cold meats, cheeses, potatoes based products and herbs, as well as entrepreneurs offering excursion and recreational services from Podlasie Nadbużańskie.

The project is an element of the strategy of building local patriotism, the basic principle of which is to support domestic business. On a national scale, by developing a comprehensive product, service and commercial offer, the project meets the noticeable changes in consumer behaviour, emphasizing the awareness of the

product, its origin, degree of processing and the quality resulting from it, in line with the global slow food and slow life movements.

Added value: mutual assistance of entrepreneurs and local producers from the Bug Valley translated into a significant increase in sales, and its original form was enthusiastically received by customers.

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Project: BioHub Bazar - local food for the local community

The aim of the project is to support the organization of the supply chain of high-quality food, primarily through marketing and processing, exchange of knowledge between producers and creating a network of contacts and foundations of the Producer Group. Building a direct sales platform and the involvement of high-quality food producers in cooperation enables the promotion and sale of locally produced high-quality food in the Warmia-Masury Voivodeship.



Thanks to the cooperation with the local government, it was possible to create a market for selling high-quality food. BioHub Bazar also performs educational functions and contributes to the dissemination of knowledge in the field of short supply chains in accordance with the idea of "farm to fork", organic farming, the development of a new economy and the promotion of environmentally friendly solutions.

Added value: formation of an informal group of BioHub Bazar Producers. Promotion of low-emission and zero waste economy, enhancement of biodiversity and revitalization of degraded agro-ecosystems.

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Project: Virtual field, real product - creating an innovative model of selling agricultural products under the measure "Cooperation"

Representatives of the science, business, information technology and agriculture jointly implement a project resulting from market needs. The beneficiaries of the project will be farmers and consumers looking for agricultural products from a reliable source.



The aim of the project is to develop and implement an innovative model for the sale of agricultural products in the form of a website that allows you to order the cultivation of agricultural products directly from the farmer, in a specific, designated area of an arable field. The subject of sale, significantly increasing the price, will be not only product, but above all the cultivation service provided by the farmer. The new model of selling agricultural products should ensure transparency in terms of the origin of products, their quality and cultivation methods. The project implementation will also contribute to shortening the supply chain, as the website will be the only "intermediary" between the farmer and the consumer.

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Project: Safe farm - product, process and marketing innovation related to the breeding of broiler chickens under the measure "Cooperation"

The aim of the project is to implement the Safe Farm quality system in order to obtain raw material for slaughter - broiler chickens - of higher quality while rearing and feeding chickens with the use of natural minerals.

The Safe Farm quality system offers better feed digestibility, reduction of bird foot disease (FPD) and better meat quality. It also reduces the emission of harmful gases and slows down the release of nitrogen into the

soil. As a result of using the system, the breeder increases animal welfare and cares for the natural environment.

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LAGs and their cooperation projects

Rural development experts were clear as to the vital role of Local Action Groups acting through the LEADER approach as being critical to community-based shaping of the future of the Polish countryside.

One of the ways in which LAGs can foster ideas and improve the perspectives and prospects of their communities is through cooperation projects – these projects, which aim to share experience and ideas, are tailored to the inhabitants of their area, investment in human capital and engaging young people from their areas to participate in various projects: thematic youth camps, journalism workshops involving video and film, workshops on cooking, recycling, and entrepreneurship.



Project: Young Local Leaders



The Tygiel Doliny Bugu Local Action Group (LAG) initiated an international cooperation project with the Bemy Razem LAG and NUMENAS LAG from Lithuania. The challenge facing these Groups is preventing the migration of young, educated and entrepreneurial people from rural areas, combined with the related disappearance of tradition and cultural identity. The project aimed to engage young rural residents, integrating communities and strengthening social capital.

Future leaders of the communities joined together in developing principles of cooperation, methods of animation and activation in rural areas using the Method of Organizing a Local Community, using local, cultural, tourist and social resources. Youth camps were organized involving recycling workshops and hands-on work on small infrastructure (building a gazebo and a rehabilitation square for people with disabilities). The leitmotif was to strengthen interpersonal bonds, build identity and the willingness to organize joint activities. Young animators acquired the necessary knowledge and experience to activate the inhabitants and gained the foundations to continue working with local communities.

Added value: work to evolve young people's perception of both the needs and resources of their closest environment and publication of a guide " A method for a young leader "and the folder "Young leaders as a chance for local community development".

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Project: Youth Communication Academy

In order to reach out to young people and to choose the one most able to cooperate in promoting the idea of the LEADER approach, Lider Pojezierza Local Action Group (LAG) joined with nine other Polish LAGs and one from the Czech Republic to organize journalism workshops.

Professional journalists, filmmakers and radio operators conducted workshops on the basics of journalism in the field of: multimedia, television and radio.

The youth also participated in

television debates on topics of interest to them, such as school reform, and in a live recording on the Radio. The summary of the project was the preparation of the staging of the historic meeting of Dobrawa and Mieszko I in Hradec Moravici.

Added value: The project activated young people and gave them tools to promote their potential and potential of people implementing new ideas and projects. It showed them media activity and creativity. Participants' debates, moderation and filming are an element of innovation. The youth developed and implemented an additional project: a visit to the Museum of Money. The project showed young people development opportunities and a new career path, among others journalism studies.



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Project:

Eco North

Four Baltic countries: Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Poland have undertaken a project aimed at young people and consisting in the dissemination of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural environment among the inhabitants.

By participating in youth camps, young people aged 15-20 inspired each other to care for the natural environment and sustainable socio-economic development, including broadening their knowledge and skills in the field of entrepreneurship. During the camps, young people integrated, visited the beneficiaries of LAG activities - local entrepreneurs using pro-ecological solutions, designed their own enterprises based on specific ideas using ecological solutions and promoted pro-ecological attitudes among the inhabitants.



Added value: strengthening social capital, communication and cooperation skills on the international forum, young people gain knowledge about environmentally friendly solutions, innovations and the opportunity to present their ideas for implementation in these areas, learn entrepreneurial attitudes.

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Project: Entrepreneurship + Operability + Cooperation + Economy = Development

The project consisted in creating ideas for local start-ups by a group of young people aged 14-16. Young people took part in workshops on creating a business plan, in economic board and internet games, where it was possible to virtually set up a business and multiply profits. The young participants could prepare entrance to the labour market by setting up their own company, learning about the principles of the company's operations, and learning about competitiveness on the market in theoretical and practical terms.

Study visits to local companies developing in the immediate vicinity, which on the one hand are small family businesses, and on the other large companies successfully entering the domestic market, were an opportunity to listen to the history of a given business activity and meet an entrepreneur who based his business on local resources.

Added value: sense of activation among participants by co-creating a board game and testing it. A life lesson that allows young people to think differently and think with hope about the future. The project contributed to the creation of entrepreneurial attitudes among young people who will finish their education in the near future, enter the labour market and implement the developed ideas for starting their own business.



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Project: Region in movie and on a plate - Cooperation for regional development

LAG KOLD from Poland and Flaeming-Havel e.V from Germany carried out intergenerational tasks involving disadvantaged groups, seniors and youth from rural areas. Each group felt the desire to promote the tourist attractiveness of the region and learn about their local traditions and habits. Young people gained knowledge and skills to take photos and videos with the ability to find interesting places for presentation. The photos taken were placed on boards on the hiking trails in the area of both LAGs.

The project uses the experience of seniors in passing the habits (regional culinary dishes and old yard games) to the younger generation, which allowed them to be recreated and implemented by young people in their regions.



Added value: presenting old backyard games and the possibility of their alternative use by young people in place of their current computer interests. Seniors had the opportunity to "leave" their homes in the rural and feel self-esteem. Workshop meeting for European integration and the fight against xenophobia. Publication of a Polish-German culinary folder.

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The Polish Rural Network and the Polish Innovation Network support the Rural Development Programme in Poland.

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