

PART II

ARTICLES

Jiří BLAŽEK*, Martin HAMPL*

TYPES AND SYSTEMS OF ACTORS IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THEIR FUNCTION AND REGULATORY POTENTIAL

Abstract: The evaluation of the actors in regional development is only one component/level within the regional research. However, it is a level which increases its significance and has or could have the key role in the sphere of regional development and at the same time reflects the problems on other levels. It is in fact the proportionality and balance of the whole system that determines the resulting effects of activities and regulatory competence of actors. If there is an imbalance – even an asymmetry – in this system, advocacy of only certain interests becomes understandably imminent, as well as a reduction of interactions (not only) in the organisation of regional society.

Differentiation of actors derives primarily from the distribution of power and wealth in a society, and thus it has always played an exceptionally significant role. However, as a consequence of the hierarchical organisation of the society this differentiation was noticeably asymmetrical. The non-equivalence of partial subjects/actors of regional development has led to the understandable domination of ‘deterministic’ relations and the plurality of interests and then to the dominance of ‘competitive’ relations. Only gradually do interactions of a cooperative kind successively break through the growth of mutual interconnections, linkages and necessity of social elements and partial systems, and thus the increasing of organic nature of (geo)societal systems. This will be finally illustrated through the difference between ‘symmetric’ systems of actors in developed countries and the ‘asymmetric’ global system.

Key words: regional development actors, balances versus asymmetric systems, social capital, developed countries, global system.

* Jiří BLAŽEK, * Martin HAMPL, Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science, Praha 2, Albertov 6, Czech Republic, e-mail: blazek@natur.cuni.cz

1. INTRODUCTION

Interest in the function and interactions of the different actors in regional development has recently become an increased focus in the study of (not only) regional problems. In addition to Giddens's (1984) well-known theory of structuration which rejects the idea that actors can be separated from structures, as was the position held by advocates of classical structuralism, it was institutionally oriented theories of regional development in particular which stressed the prominent role of actors. In this context a particular significance was given to the discussion on localities initiated by the publication of conclusions from the extensive project led by Cooke (1989), which stressed the significance of activity of the actors in regional development. Many authors dealt with the role of these actors and their interactions for competitiveness of regional economies, and we can refer here at least to one representative of the Californian School, Storper (1995), and in Europe for instance to the research done by Malmberg (1996).

It is necessary to see the reasons for the shift of focus of regional research both in the growing complexity of regional development problems and in the widening of the scope for the activity of actors (firms, universities, intermediating agencies etc.) in regional development in connection with the ongoing democratisation of social systems. In the first case there are two trends in the growing complexity of regional development problems. On the one hand the dynamics of change is escalating and is becoming reflected within the economic and social system. On the other hand it is the increasing influence – though often mediated – of non-economic factors on economic growth itself. This is expressed in the stress on the role of human and particularly social capital within regional development studies, and thus the deeper socio-cultural roots of the economic system. At the same time there is an emphasis on ecological demands and on the need for ecological prudence in economic production. Thus, not only is the regional development becoming more dynamic but its interdependencies are becoming wider, more complex and more integral.

The evaluation of the actors in regional development themselves is, of course, only a component part, even a component level, within the regional research. However, this is the level which increases its significance and has or could have the key role in the sphere of regional development and of its widely conceptualised regulation. At the same time the study of actors reflects the problems on other levels – precisely because of its conditional activity of interests and the deepening integral force of the whole system of actors in regional development. However, this is valid only to a limited extent for individual actors and even for the whole – gradually developing – actor systems. It is in fact the proportionality and balance of the whole system that determines the resulting effects of activity and regulatory competence of actors. If there is an imbalance – even an asymmetry – in this system, then advocacy of only

certain interests becomes understandably imminent, as well as the inevitable reduction of the feedback type mechanisms/interactions among various regional development actors and finally, an overall ‘degeneration’ of democracy and even of sound economic competition itself. The direction of this deformation or asymmetry is of secondary importance: either an increased/inappropriate monopolisation of economy and even of political influences is in question or on the contrary there is a danger of equalisation and demotivation/frustration in the sphere of economy and of populism on the political level.

Stressing the important role of the system of actors in regional development as a specific layer in the structure of factors and linked regional development processes is justified and understandable only once the position of this layer within the integral model of regional development has been determined. The conceptual basis for the development of this model can be a general scheme of critical realism distinguishing three basic levels/layers in the relations of conditionality and consequences expressed by a succession structure – mechanisms – events, resp. phenomena (Bhaskar, 1979; Sayer, 1984). This succession in essence characterises causal relations, however, it is not a one-way and unique causality but one based on the combined interaction of causes and effects, which is of course more adequate to the complexity and variability of social development. The described scheme (figure 1) is relevant for social reality of a general type, and thus is applicable even to the study of regional development. It has been used in another paper on the factors, mechanisms and processes of regional development (Hampl *et al.*, 2008), but it has been terminologically modified by the succession factors – mechanisms – processes, and phenomena.

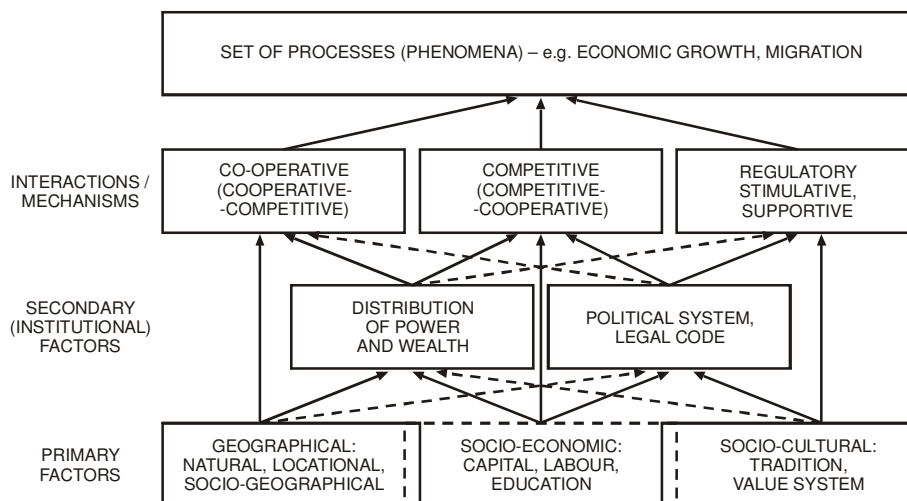


Fig. 1. Social development – factors – mechanisms – phenomena: general framework
Source: adopted from Hampl *et al.* (2008)

However, within the discussion on this scheme, the need for a two-level factor differentiation was stressed, a differentiation which also has its general meaning in the terms of recognition of social reality. In the case of the regional development, the specification of primary factors concerns, for instance geographical location, capital resources or socio-cultural tradition and long established values, while secondary – or institutional – factors represent factors such as ownership, legislative framework etc. These secondary factors are the principal defining feature of the social reality because they determine the power position and the interest orientation of the social actors on the one hand, and thus also the control over the primary factors. On the other hand there are the ‘rules of the game’ and the ways mechanisms operate (either cooperative, competitive or regulatory ones) and also the results of the interaction of these mechanisms, i.e. conditions/phenomena and processes of changes in regional differentiation itself. This differentiation of the two described factors is in many respects only an analogy to the differentiation of the social base and superstructure in the works of Karl Marx, although rejecting the shades of their relative asymmetry. The complex configuration into more levels is however characteristic even for the actor system itself. Generally, it is possible here to stress in particular the key interaction social structure – the individual agent that is conceptualised within structuration theory, critical realism or institutional economy (see Hodgson, 1999). However, there are other types of interactions which are interesting for regional development issues, which will be dealt with below.

From this introduction follows, that this paper will be focused on themes of two kinds. First, there is the question of the proportionality of actor systems, which we consider as a key precondition for an intentional (and positive) influence on regional development. Second, there is a question of the wider links of this system, in both structural and developmental sense. The starting point is represented here by the emphasis on widening of the variety of interests of regional development actors and the increase of the role of actors with complex/integral interest orientation, i.e. in the first instance of the state and local authorities (section 2). Next the actor system is characterised in terms of the national system in developed democratic countries (section 3). This system is characterised in more detail in the specific case of the Czech Republic, including the process of its post-totalitarian transformation and corresponding development (section 4). However, in the contemporary world there is a fundamental difference in the role and proportionality of actor systems on the national and supranational levels. These differences and their roots are therefore discussed in section 5. The final section is an attempt at a concise summary and a generalisation of partial assessments.

2. THE GROWTH OF ACTIVITY AND OF INTEREST DIFFERENTIATION OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

The significance and influence of actor systems on regional development are undoubtedly increasing in the process of social evolution. Thus the mediatory role of these systems also increases between primary factors and mechanisms of the regional development (physical-geographic factors, geographic position etc.). However, in essence it is not about a unilateral assessment of the importance of certain actors. Only in connection with the general developmental tendencies of a society (and regional development itself) is it relevant to talk about a higher regulatory influence of actors – but in the first place of their system as a whole – on (progressive) changes, on the dynamics of social and regional development. First, this is illustrated by the increased role of social capital in contemporary social development in developed countries (see for instance Kostelecký *et al.*, 2007). In this sense there is a key activating function of actors of (not only) regional development and their interactive collaboration (a recent example of a research focused on study of initiative of various actors on a regional level is given in a paper by Smejkal (2008). This is naturally all the more feasible as the actor system is more complex and structured and the societies are more open (and democratic) and in how far the feedback relations can work effectively and the social organisation is flexible. The growth in actors' activity both conditions and is conditioned by the growth of differentiation of their interests.

The growth of activity of actors as well as growth of differentiation of their interests were in many ways reflected in the development of the society's regional organisation. The reasons can be seen in the complex interdependencies of this organisation, i.e. an environmental social organisation, in interdependencies comprising also physical-geographic factors (like type of landscape, fertility of soil, climate etc.) and also factors such as geographic position of the region in question. A primary factor in the development was the geographical configuration of the society, which was adapted to differentiation of physical-geographic conditions with respect to the suitability (carrying capacity) for the population, the availability of natural resources and also the locational suitability. This is, after all, expressed by the concept of geographical determinism as the dominating geographic paradigm of the second half of the 19th century. However, with the start of the industrial society the significance of physical-geographic factors was diminishing while the role of social factors, particularly 'hard' economic ones, became of key significance. In this phase of development the principal change in the regional organisation of a society emerges, i.e. a mass formation of nodal regions and their hierarchical systems within the framework of the national systems (see also classical location theories).

In the later stages of industrial development and particularly within its transition into the post-industrial era, not only do the complexity and diversification of economic activities increase, but also their linkages with political, social and cultural activities deepen (see Hampl, 2005). The emphasis on qualitative changes of production (high-tech products, importance of innovation etc.) and their flexibility has led and will continue to lead to an increasing role for human and social capital. Socio-cultural embeddedness of economics is thus reinforced as well as the need and opportunities for political representatives to articulate the interests of communities they represent. In principle, in the development of regional organisation there has been a functional shift from the natural (physical geographic), then to economic and currently to widely understood social factors and thus also from so-called hard factors (and interactions of objects) to soft factors (and interactions of subjects/actors). For more on this issue see figure 2.

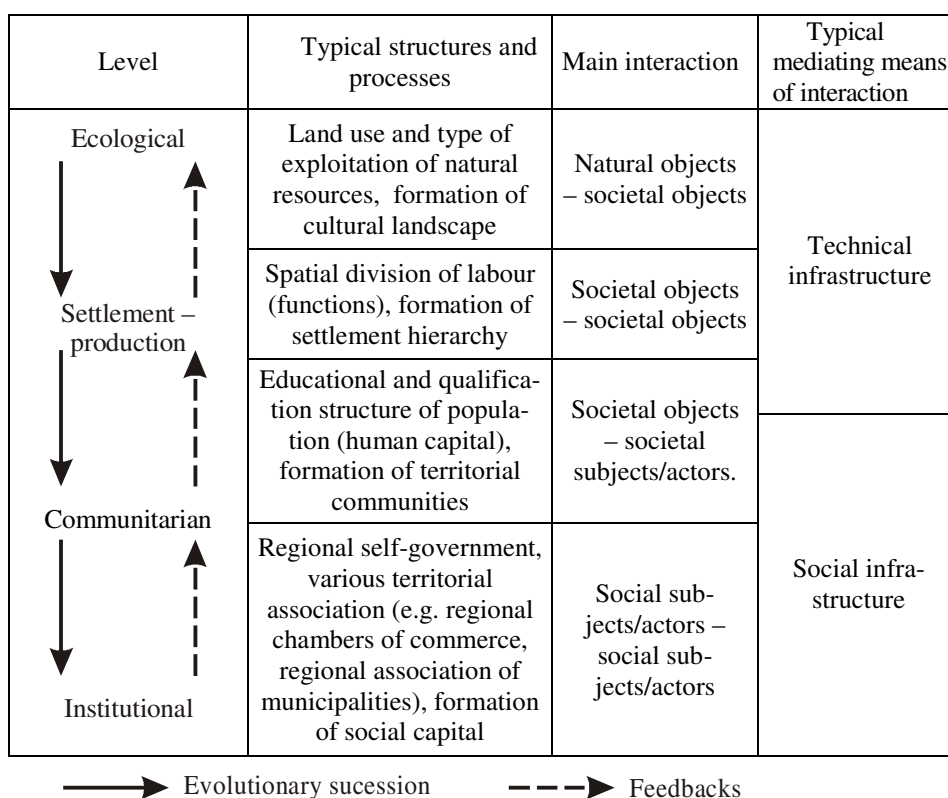


Fig. 2. Regional organisation of society

Source: adapted from Hampl (2003)

Social development leads of course to constantly more complex organisational structures which are characterised not only by their increasing differentiation of interests of regional development actors and by increasing intensity of their mutual interactions, but also by the increasing complexity/integrity of their systems. Generally it holds true that the economic system has the highest developmental dynamic, which is always powerfully influenced by political frameworks. However, in the post-industrial period the broader socio-cultural framework, and even the broadest framework defining social development, the environmental or ecological framework, are getting more important. Actual development within the socio-cultural sphere is projected in the first place into changes in the value hierarchies of people and of communities and into the spread of value orientations including appreciation of value of environmental factors. In this sense even the role of the environmental framework is changing as well as its active reflection by citizens and by society. It is no longer primarily the immediate conditionality of economy and of social development by natural (physical-geographic) factors but a complex influence on the quality of life through the environment and a deeper awareness of strategic dependencies of society on nature. Alongside the growth of activity and the diversification of actors in regional development, and the increased significance of endogenous factors of regional development, there is also a widening of the set of values and interests and the increasing complexity of their system. These trends proceed concurrently on various levels while the mutual interconnection (interaction) of these levels also becomes deeper and more dynamic, and there are more reasons for this than just the globalisation that it is so often attributed to today.

3. THE TYPES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTORS AND THEIR SYSTEM: NATIONAL LEVEL

The results of the above discussion also lead to the principles of the classification of actors in regional development and consequently also to a synthetic classification scheme. Substantial differences between regional development actors fall into three groups:

- first, there is the range of their interest which can be in a simplified form expressed by a polarity between partial and complex/integral interests. In a concentrated form it can be illustrated by the effort to maximise the profits of private businesses on the one hand (partial interests), and on the other by the effort of key public institutions, particularly the state, to achieve a relatively harmonious development of the society as a whole (complex/integral interests);
- second, there is the range of interests, which can be linked primarily to the scale on which these interests are followed and pursued. However, another implication could also be presented by the sectoral differentiation of spheres of

activity, but it is largely included in the above differentiation of the extent of partiality or integrity of interest of regional development actors;

– third, there is the functional (power) differentiation of actors, and thus a real enforcement of their interests. This differentiation is, of course, the most important but it is difficult to specify.

It is necessary to consider how the above classification principles act together. The attempt to provide a synthesis of the classification of regional development actors is shown in figure 3, which is based on the first and second classification dimension. The criterion of the power differentiation is then taken into account at least by distinguishing between the ‘key’ and ‘other’ regional development actors. Using the given types of actors, the described scheme is also specified in more detail for developed democratic national systems. To a large extent it is also an analogy of the earlier classification of regional development actors from the point of view of the formation and functioning of local authorities (Dostál and Hampl, 1993).

The principal meaning of the given classification does not consist in the systematic support and differentiation of the bulk of the regional development actors but in the identification of the main interest polarities and corresponding interactions of actors, which should be oriented to the coordination of regional development. There are three kinds of interactions (described below) that must be considered for this coordination.

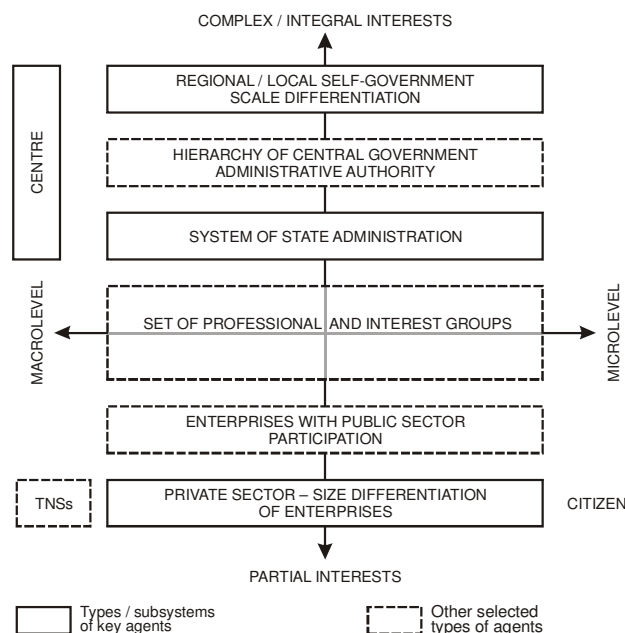


Fig. 3. Actors of regional development: typology and outline of the system on a national level

The emphasis on these interactions also raises questions about the formation of the necessary mechanisms for consensus building and for setting the rules of the game, which is clearly the role of the political sphere. However, the precise significance of these interactions and their main coordinating function stems from development phase of the region in question.

The relation between the public and private sectors is generally regarded as the most significant relation/interaction or polarity. This is undoubtedly legitimate from the management of national economy point of view, not only from regional development point of view. However, this is a relation between the whole, predominantly hierarchically arranged systems of public institutions and the plurality of economic actors (although internally partially linked). This relation is basically coordinated by the rule of law and the connected system of the 'rules of the game' and it is first and foremost the outcome of political/electoral mechanisms. Of course, these results can change and modify the rules of the game, particularly in the extent and form of regulation of private sector actors. Within democratic systems the continuity and relative stability of these rules is basically preserved, but this issue already exceeds the scope of this survey. However, it is important to emphasise their general influence on all social subsystems, and thus on regional development as well. In this context should be stressed the fundamental importance of the regional impacts of sectoral policies pursued either on the national level (see e.g. Blažek and Macešková, 2009) or on the supranational level, particularly the European one. It is also necessary to stress the regional impacts of overall fiscal policy and its importance for stability and integration of national economy and society. Finally, it is also worth mentioning the particular significance of the regionally differentiated regulatory rules which reflects other interests than the purely economic (social, ecological, cultural etc.). Regional policy or the policies of local elected authorities have their specific influence, although this is rather limited in comparison to the regional impacts of sectoral policies. For instance, the latter can adapt/differentiate conditions for businesses, perhaps with the aim of supporting the development particularly of lagging regions (soft-loans, the development of industrial premises etc.)

The most important of these for regional development is naturally the sphere of activity of public institutions, whether because of the complex nature of their interests and roles, or because of the domination of the state in the sphere of power. From the point of view of regional development, therefore, the most important thing is the interaction (polarity but cooperation as well) of the state territorial administration and local self-government. This relation and the influence of both territorial administration systems need to be evaluated on two levels. The first one relates to the general strength of local authorities within the national system. This relates both to the scale of competence and the volume of financial resources of local authorities in relation to 'the centre'. The immediate

factor here is the type of state (unitary, federal, or a confederation). However, from the pragmatic point of view, more interesting and perhaps more important is the difference in the functions of the two systems. While the state administration is predominantly organised according to sectors, local authorities are organised territorially, i.e. comprehensively and across the sectors. In this sense the function of local authorities cannot be substituted either in their primary role or in their partnership in a 'well-balanced' system of public territorial management. Traditionally, and still to a significant degree today sectoral management has predominated over the territorial one. However, tendencies to break through this 'secondary' asymmetry in developed countries are clearly discernible and the role and success of coordination of both sectoral and territorial approaches is increasing, which can be considered as entirely positive.

The third differential dimension allowing us to distinguish actors and their sphere of activity is that of scale. Here, too, this differentiation is useful primarily within the public territorial management, again in two senses, or on two levels. The first has already been discussed above, i.e. the relation between the centre and the regional or local authorities. However, in view of the hierarchical organisation of the state administration this issue is limited to the system of self-governing territorial units, while the possibilities of coordinated cooperation between self-governing territorial units are limited because their competence is defined 'from above' and their relationship is not hierarchical. The main sphere of cooperation of self-government units is thus primarily their common relation to centre and to the linked 'sectoral approach' of managing territorial development represented by line ministries.

Although many of the questions here are still being debated and have not been settled in any detail the key problems are sufficiently well formulated. They concern primarily the proportionality/symmetry of the system of actors in regional development. Using the example of relatively developed democratic national systems we can establish at least tendencies to relative proportionality of the (not only) regional development actor systems. An example of this is the gradually increasing share of the local and regional authorities in the total volume of public budgets (for the case of the Czech Republic see Blažek, 2002). Though the partial asymmetry of systems 'balanced' in this way is clear, further improvements in the balance of relations between the two systems are clearly possible. However, this observation must be restricted to more developed democratic national systems and even in these systems there are tendencies infringing the necessary 'proportionalities', mainly as a result of the reinforced influences of the so-called globalisation. This is becoming clear primarily in the case of smaller and less developed countries, where large supranational companies are capable of directly or indirectly influencing the terms under which they can operate in a country. The problem of asymmetrical power relations between supranational (global) corporations and local authorities (communities) is,

however, also an issue for state administration on national level. Thus on the national level supranational asymmetric and deforming influences can interfere with the domestic proportionalities. These problems are at least briefly discussed in the fifth section.

4. THE EXAMPLE OF FORMATION OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTORS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The breakdown of communism and the subsequent socio-economic transformation of countries in East-Central 'laboratory' for monitoring not only the transformation of the basic principles of operation of society and economy but also the birth or restoration of the whole range of actors in the public, private and non-profit sectors. While the restoration of relatively autonomous actors within the public sector on the local and regional levels (municipalities, regions) was managed to a significant extent by central government authorities, much of the spontaneity went into the formation of private and non-profit sectors.

In the case of self-government formation on the municipal level and after cumbersome development also on the regional level (for more detail see Illner, 2003; Perlín, 1996), the joint model of public administration has been chosen, for understandable reasons. This model permits certain flexibility on the local level, particularly offering the possibility of breaking up municipalities forcibly merged during the communist period. The natural reaction to the promotion of collectivism under communism, on all levels and in all spheres, however, resulted in very limited willingness of newly emerged actors to cooperate. This was proved for instance in the complicated creation of the Union of Czech Towns and Municipalities, which never gained the critical mass of municipalities as their members. Later collaboration on the local and possibly micro-regional level was often motivated by pragmatic reasons (acquisition of subsidies, joint infrastructure building etc.) and thus these were mostly more or less single-purpose associations. This inclination to *ad hoc* collaboration is also shown in the recent (2006–2007) petition of 1,300 primarily small communities to the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic pleading for the abolition of coefficients used in the redistribution of tax revenues which give results in smaller revenue (relative *per capita*) in small municipalities than in bigger villages, towns and particularly cities.

On the other hand, the existence of an institutional 'vacuum' above the local level before constitution of the regional authorities in 2001 was perceived by some important actors as a deficiency and this was the main reason for establishing at least some regional developmental agencies (for more see Vozáb, 1998).

However, in comparison for instance with Poland (Gorzelač, 1998) the regional developmental agencies in the Czech Republic came into existence later and in much smaller numbers. A rather different case was the Association of Regions, the origin of which was largely motivated by the need to find a basis for solving the urgent problems linked with the ill-prepared reform of public administration on a regional level. A considerable part was certainly also played by the different political orientation of regional representatives in comparison with the government of the time. Both these motives can be labelled as push, not pull factors.

These examples show that in case of local and regional self-government the prevailing approach of actors to collaboration is pragmatic and largely oriented towards partial and short-term goals.

The formation of actors within the private and non-profit sectors proceeded differently than in the public sector. Besides privatisation of former state-owned enterprises (often linked with their division into several firms – e.g. Pavlínek, 2008) orchestrated by the state, right from the start of the transformation a significant number of new businesses came into existence. While dynamic political changes in the first years of transformation soon enforced a constitution of a tripartite round table (unions, employers and the government) the situation on regional and local levels was different. Although the local level does not offer a sufficient platform for collaboration of entrepreneurs except in the biggest cities, regional self-governments came into existence only in 2001 when the basic principles of a democratic society and market economy were already established and thus the motivation to create new associations on a regional level was limited. Consequently, the number of business associations, professional groups or non-profit organisations on the regional level remained limited (see Smejkal, 2008). This means that it is very difficult for the public sector to open new communication channels with enterprises on a regional level and often the only feasible way is to contact them one by one, which is ineffective and time consuming (Blažek and Uhlíř, 2007). Therefore, the general problem is a complete lack of institutions which would mediate contacts both within the private sector and between private enterprises and (often public) institutions of research and development. The result is that the regional authorities are insufficiently aware not only of important businesses but also of the actual capabilities and research specialisations of scientific and research institutions in the region (Blažek and Uhlíř, 2007). This example of actor formation on a regional level in the Czech Republic thus indicates some significant reasons which may (and do) work against the establishment of a ‘balanced’ system of actors.

The above, predominantly illustrative, examples provide a picture of the difficulties in transformational changes in the actor systems of the newly created societal system, particularly in political and economic terms. In essence, on the one hand, despite above mentioned limitations, there has been some success in

creating a relatively well balanced system of regional development actors, but on the other hand the (qualitative) level of their functioning and interaction and collaboration (including mechanisms for conflicts mediation) is still insufficient. It is apparent that the creation of the system of the institutions themselves could be realised more easily and faster than the necessary change of 'culture' in their behaviour.

5. TYPES AND SYSTEM OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTORS: A SUPRANATIONAL/GLOBAL SYSTEM

On the supranational and particularly on global level, the system of regional development actors is substantially different from the national system. The fundamental reason for this is the different degree and quality of integration of these systems. In spite of the often emphasised 'end of national states' (e.g. Ohmae, 1995) these units are still the most powerfully integrated societal formations and also have also the highest degree of sovereignty from the point of view of international law. In this sense the global system is a unit without an integrating institution, with an unusual degree of internal heterogeneity, for socio-cultural and economic reasons, and internally differentiated into the groups of extremely unequal countries in terms of size and power. Thus geo-political conceptions dominate in studies of the global system, although these also include geo-economic and socio-cultural evaluation. Existing regional development theories can be applied here only marginally (see particularly neo-Marxist and similar approaches like e.g. the dependency theories – Amin, 1977; Frank, 1978 and others – or the theory of unequal change – Emmanuel, 1972). More inherent are sociological theories and those of the political sciences: among the most popular is the emphasised macro-fragmentation of the global system (Huntington, 1997) and particularly the concept of the asymmetrical arrangement of the world in terms of a core – semi-periphery – periphery (Wallerstein, 1979, 1984), although it is in many respects adapted from the classic theory of polarised development.

From the above it is clear that problems of regional development actors and their systems on the level of supranational systems are completely different than those on national/state level and require different approaches than those applied within regional research. The distribution of power comprising both economic and security issues as well as questions about political influence has a key role – notably on a global level. These problems of course go beyond the scope of this survey and cannot be evaluated here in any detail (on these questions see e.g. Dostál and Hampl, 2000; Hampl, 2009). Nevertheless, this paper at least indicates a possible classification scheme for a supranational level. This is

because of the confrontation with the classification within the national systems framework, because from this confrontation follows firstly the need for a balanced actor systems and secondly, the dependence of the balance of the actor system on the degree and the quality of the integration of societal units in question (state, region).

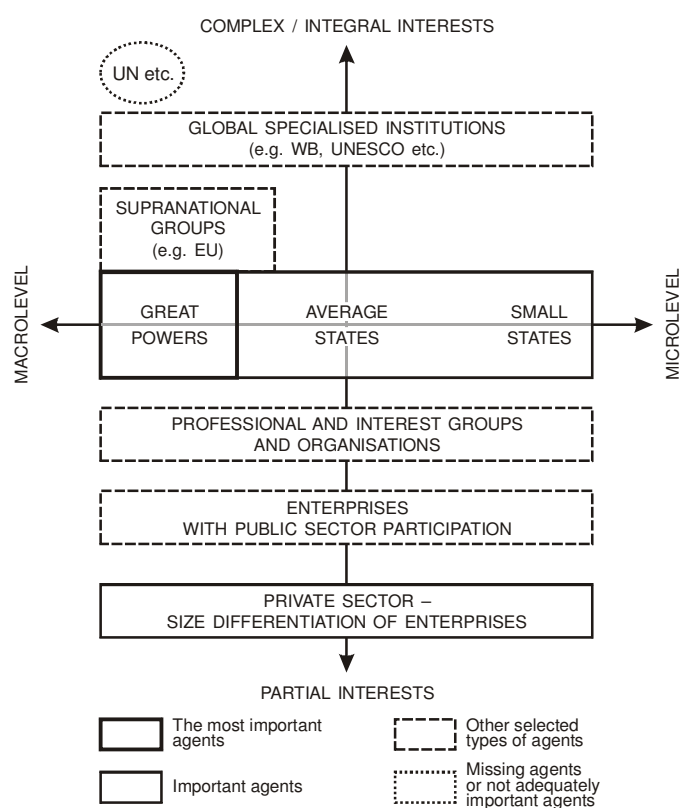


Fig. 4. Actors of regional development: typology and outline of the system on a international/global level

The main types of actors operating on a global level are given in figure 4. It is important to stress the 'loss' of complex/integral interests and competence of states on the one hand and the absence of integrating significant actors on the other (institutions like the UN, World Bank etc. are relatively insignificant). At the same time, the size/scale differentiation of countries and the key role of superpowers are considered to be the most important. However, size differences cannot be comprehended only from the territorial or population point of view but as a volume of the power potential in which partial dimensions (territorial,

population, economic etc. – see also Hampl, 2009) are considered and weighted in various ways.

The general character of system of regional development actors is represented, of course, by its asymmetrical, unbalanced configuration and thus by a rather limited and deformed space for mutual coordination. The low level of integrity of a global system naturally leads to other issues: socio-cultural and economic heterogeneity, the limited role of feedbacks etc. This all limits the development of cooperative structures and mechanisms and on the contrary highlights the role of competitive interactions which, however, concern unequal units and thus are rather of deterministic nature. Overcoming these contradictions and obstacles to (harmonious) development is an extremely complex and long-term process. In addition, the necessary political will and integrating institutions are missing in the contemporary world. Already the problems of the European integration process illustrate the scale of this challenge, despite the fact it is difficult to find any more suitable and better prepared supranational unit in the world which is more ‘capable of integration’ than the EU. The obstacles for integration on global level discussed above manifest themselves by a specific way in the interruption of the ‘usual’ regional development cycle anticipated by the theory of polarised development. This theory expects the gradual transition from the diverging phase into the convergent one (as is supposed by many other authors, even from former times – e.g. Kuznetz, 1955). Thus it is apparent that the continuous succession of both key periods in a regional developmental cycle (i.e. period of divergence and convergence) is complexly conditioned, namely by the level of democratisation, socio-cultural homogeneity, economic interdependency, and understandably also by the creation of a balanced system of regional development actors. To sum up, the regional development cycle is dependent upon the degree and the quality of system integrity.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper was to describe the systemic links within the sets of regional development actors and at the same time placing these sets and the relevant systems into a wider framework, from both a structural point of view and a developmental one. In the first case, the specific and activating role of an actor system was emphasised as a part of the second (institutional) level of factors influencing regional development. These factors altogether create an institutional environment which has the key role of ‘an active mediator’ between the primary factors and mechanisms of regional development. While primary factors (e.g. geographical location, capital resources or socio-cultural tradition)

determine the 'objective' and the traditional developmental potential of territorial units, secondary – institutional – factors (e.g. ownership, the rule of law etc.) may on the one hand create a new type of potential (e.g. an innovative milieu – see Breschi and Lissoni, 2001) or even social capital (see Kostelecký *et al.*, 2007). On the other hand, secondary or institutional factors influence the possibilities of activation of both traditional and new type of potential, reflect the plurality of interests of social actors and set the rules of the game for their mutual competition and cooperation. The forms of regional development mechanisms are also derived from these rules.

From the developmental point of view it is possible to talk particularly about the needs and at the same time about real tendencies in forming the more complex and better balanced systems of (not only) regional development actors. Differentiation of actors is derived primarily from the distribution of power and wealth in a society, and thus it has always played an exceptionally significant role. However, as a consequence of the hierarchical organisation of the society this differentiation was highly asymmetrical. The unequal standing of partial (not only) regional development actors (e.g. firms, NGOs, universities) has led to the domination of 'deterministic' relations while the plurality of actor's interests has led to the dominance of 'competitive' relations. Only gradually are interactions of a cooperative kind becoming more relevant – due to the growth of mutual interconnections, linkages and mutual dependency of social elements and partial systems as a reflection of increasing integrity of (geo)societal systems (see also developmental typology of hierarchies – Hampl, 2000). In this sense, development heads not towards the growth or drop in the significance of regional development actors but to the increasing quality of the whole actor system, to a more complex and balanced system with a more complex impact. Thus on the one hand the mediating mechanisms and cooperative activities of actors within their system are improving. On the other hand the interests and activities of actors spread from the economic and political spheres to the socio-cultural sphere and in a wider sense (see above) also to the ecological sphere. These tendencies are particularly significant in the case of regional development. The probability of the development of all the tendencies discussed above is, however, depends on the overall level of social development which is obviously connected with a higher level of democratisation and socio-cultural interconnectedness. This was finally illustrated through the difference between the relatively 'symmetric' systems of actors in developed countries and the clearly 'asymmetric' global system.

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