

Capacities of African-oriented Polish NGOs: a quantitative approach

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Abstract. The aim of the paper is to investigate the capacity of Polish non-governmental organisations implementing development projects in Africa. Drawing on an integrated systemic perspective of capacity that recognises internal and external factors, this paper focuses on internal factors. Using a quantitative approach to operationalise capacity, the study suggests that those non-governmental organisations implementing the Polish development policy in Africa are highly polarised and can be divided in two groups. Whilst the first group comprises two fairly large organisations with long track records and the ability to fundraise internationally, the second group consists of smaller NGOs of different capacities and working strategies. Most Polish NGOs operate within independent networks – Catholic and secular ones. The study identifies a research gap related to the lack of comprehensive study of religious organisations’ contribution to development assistance in Africa.

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1. Introduction

Poland, along with other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, has been recognised as an emerging donor since the new millennium. The literature concerning Polish development assistance is rich, though it is not diversified in terms of the range of topics. Since the accession of Poland to the European Union, foreign institutions, non-governmental organisations and individual scientists have been analysing the Polish development cooperation system mainly from the perspective of the Visegrad Group countries (Drażkiewicz-Grodzicka, 2013; Horký-Hlucháň & Lightfoot, 2013; Kopiński, 2012; Kudzko, 2014; Lightfoot & Szent-Ivanyi, 2014; Lightfoot & Zubizaretta, 2008; Szent-Ivanyi & Lightfoot, 2015; Szent-Ivanyi & Tetenyi, 2008) or a separate case (Wasilewska, 2006; Hinz & Hofmohl, 2013; Drażkiewicz-Grodzicka, 2013; Kochanowicz, 2013; Kugiel, 2016; Szymoniczek, 2016; OECD, 2017). These publications present a complete picture of the institutional development cooperation system during the post-socialist transformation. Less attention has been devoted to the capacity of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement the development policy.

During the transformation period, the fledgling Polish third sector built its capacity using development assistance from the United States of America and the European Union (Chimiak, 2014). At the same time, bottom-up civic engagement remained slow compared to other post-communist states. This slow development surprised Western European scholars, who still had in mind the nationwide insurgency of the Solidarity Movement (Lasińska, 2011). After the period of generous foreign subsidies in the 1990s, non-governmental organisations started substituting administrative competencies, quickly becoming dependent on governmental and European funds (Drażkiewicz-Grodzicka, 2016). Thus, the third sector's increasing dependence on state funding decreased civic engagement and directed it towards less formal, but more authentic, informal movements and social media groups (Makowski, 2015).

Accession to the European Union influenced Poland's aid provision and required a commitment to providing support not only to Eastern Europe, but

also to developing countries, through bilateral and multilateral channels (Pośpieszna, 2010). Although the priority countries of the Polish development cooperation changed several times, the basic directions remained the same. The countries with a stable position in the Polish development cooperation jigsaw are Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, where Poland supports processes of economic transformation and good governance. In the case of Global South countries, Poland systematically subsidises Palestine only, trying to be as neutral as possible in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip conflict (Szydysz, 2014). Other priority countries, however, have been frequently switched, and they have been influenced by the Polish involvement in armed conflicts; for example in Afghanistan (Stępień, 2017). The Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for the years 2016–2020 covers 12 countries, including Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Palestine, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lebanon, Myanmar, Palestine, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda. Whilst in Eastern Europe efforts focus on good governance, human capital, entrepreneurship, environmental protection and basic services delivery, in Africa good governance is not the priority of the Programme.

The third sector played an important role in the initial years of developing the Polish development cooperation (Chimiak, 2016). A special role was assigned to non-governmental organisations, private entities and public finance sector entities (Development Cooperation Act, 2011). Yet it is non-governmental organisations that are the key implementation channel, because of the stable nature of that support and tight coordination with Polish development aid priorities. The question about the capacity to implement development projects was raised by international organisations and NGOs themselves. In a recent review of development policies, the OECD stated that expansion and gradual advancement depends on the capacities of Polish NGOs, as well as on complex contracting, financing and accounting rules that hinder the possibility to adapt to changing contexts (OECD, 2017). Critical views were voiced by the Grupa Zagranica, a Polish platform of civil society organisations engaged in supporting democracy, global education and development cooperation. The major strain on NGOs with regard to the state was its *laissez-faire* approach: the government does not interfere in the

activities of non-governmental organisations, but nor too does it provide systemic support for building their capacity to implement projects (Kozek et al., 2016). Criticism concerned both the dependence of Polish assistance on Ministry of Finance subsidies, and on the organisation of competitions without adequate tools for capacity building (Center for Economic Development, 2013). In one year, organisations must apply for, raise funds for their own contribution towards, implement, and settle a development project, and this hinders their stability and results in staff turnover. The community's frustration was compounded by the fact that after the initial years of building the development cooperation in Poland, when the NGO had a great advantage over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in terms of know-how, many people from the NGO sector migrated to the MFA, but the efforts to improve NGOs' capacities remained limited (Chimiak, 2016).

While the problem of capacities of Polish NGOs has been raised in policy circles, the scholarly literature contains very little about this issue. Therefore, this gap will be addressed in this article by answering the question: what are the capacities of non-governmental organisations implementing Polish development policy? The article uses publicly available data to explore NGO capacities using a quantitative approach. Moreover, we focus on the NGOs involved in implementing projects in Africa for three reasons. Firstly, this direction is the most distant from Poland in terms of cultural and historical connections, when compared to the countries of the Eastern Partnership. Secondly, most of the development assistance from various international organisations goes to Africa. It appears that this trend is to be maintained in the years to come, and it is therefore important to recognise how Poland is positioned to participate in the global aid regime. Thirdly, Africa is in the area of Polish economic interest (Wnukowski, 2015).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In the first section, the concept of capacity is introduced, and there is a discussion of how it has been used in the academic literature. It also presents the model of capacity applied in the paper. This part is followed by the *Methodology* section, explaining the steps undertaken in the research. The *Results* section presents the empirical evidence that

emerged during the analysis, while the *Discussion* interprets the main findings. The *Conclusions* section offers brief concluding thoughts and avenues for further research.

2. NGOs Capacity

Development literature coming from academic and policy circles confirms the buzzword nature of the term "capacity" (Eade, 2007). As capacity is treated both as a topic of study and an intervention strategy, the literature on capacity is voluminous and mixes empirical and normative perspectives (Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010). Capacity can be described as a factor that allows an organisation to achieve its ends (Andersson, Faulk & Stewart, 2016; Backer, 2000; Eisinger, 2002) or as the skill of an organisation to benefit from various resources to attain its goals (Doherty, Misener & Cuskelly, 2013). Due to these different definitions, capacity remains difficult to operationalise, especially in any attempt to identify indicators that might determine what kind of capacity matters for an organisation (Light, Hubbard & Kibbe, 2004). For the aims of this study, capacity means "the process of strengthening an organisation in order to improve its performance and impact" (Connolly & Lukas, 2002: 7).

Researchers and policy makers have come up with several dimensions of capacity. The capacity of an organisation can include mission, vision, strategy, governance and leadership, administration, programme delivery and impact, strategic relationships, resource development, programme development, fundraising, human resources, systems and infrastructure, culture, and internal operations (Connolly & Lukas, 2002; Linnel, 2003). The UNDP distinguished six groups of internal factors: legal status, history of an organisation, mandate and policies, planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures, priority needs, and process of capacity building (UNDP, 2009).

In the study, the exploration of capacities of NGOs is based on the integrated systemic framework proposed by Antlöv & Brinkerhoff (2010). It is a conceptualisation of capacity of non-governmental development organisations based on the evaluation of third sector capacities both at country and global

levels (Antlöv & Brinkerhoff, 2010). The framework points out internal and external factors. Internal factors influencing capacity include vision and mission, leadership, management structures and procedures, resources, stakeholder relations, products, and performance. External factors include political and governance, socio-economic, legal and administrative factors, and norms and values. While Antlöv and Brinkerhoff (2010) applied a qualitative case study approach to explore the capacities of Indonesian NGOs, this study uses a quantitative approach based only on internal factors, assuming that external factors will be similar for all organisations due to their operation in one country. The proposed approach in this study has been selected for two reasons. Firstly, this framework clearly indicates the dimensions of capacity. Secondly, they are easily operationalised with publicly available data. At the same time, two modifications were made to the framework: the performance dimension was removed, because, as the authors themselves admitted, it can be understood as a result of other dimensions of capacity (Antlöv & Brinkerhoff, 2010). Besides, mission as a dimension of capacity was removed for two reasons. Firstly, its removal helped avoid circularity of reasoning: organisations need the capacity to achieve its overarching goal, which is expressed in the mission statement. Secondly, it is impossible to operationalise mission in a quantitative way without a significant simplification of reality.

3. Methodology

In order to diagnose the capacity of non-governmental organisations, we examined solely those organisations that had implemented at least one project in Africa between 2010 and 2018. We excluded institutions and projects funded under the Aid Volunteering Programme and Humanitarian Aid programme. In the first case, it was assumed that the organisation required a different set of institutional capacities for volunteering projects as compared to development projects; on the other hand, humanitarian aid is a less predictable source of funds that is often awarded *ad-hoc* and requires slightly different competencies than development assistance.

Consequently, the scope of this paper was limited to the beneficiaries and projects of the Polish Development Assistance competition.

Operationalisation was guided by three assumptions. Firstly, each dimension was represented by at least two sub-indicators. Secondly, the sub-indicators for one dimension could not be strongly correlated. Thirdly, sub-indicators had identical weights. The selection of sub-indicators was determined by the availability of data in the National Court Register (KRS), the public-interest organisations database of the Ministry of Finances, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, websites of organisations, and social media. Sub-indicators were identified as binary, discrete or continuous. When database was completed, destimulant indicators were converted into stimulant indicators. Then, min–max normalisation (OECD, 2008) was carried out to achieve comparability of variables. As the final step, a synthetic indicator was constructed. Table 1 presents all indicators selected for operationalisation and data sources.

The most innovative part of the research process was the application of social network analysis (SNA) using quantitative Facebook data. For this reason, this method will be discussed in detail. Facebook was selected as a source of data as it is the most popular social media in Poland, and was reported to have around 16 million users in 2018 (Business Insider Poland, 2018). Other social media such as Twitter and Instagram lag behind Facebook in popularity (UM: IPG Mediabrands Group, 2018). The popularity of Facebook makes it the most valuable communication media for private companies and, increasingly, for third sector organisations (Business Insider Poland, 2018; Żyro, 2018).

A social network consists of nodes (individual actors) and edges (relationships). Institutional Facebook profiles of organisations were regarded as nodes, while relationships between them in the form of “likes” were seen as edges. While relying on “likes” as a representation of relations among NGOs may be controversial, it is assumed that expressing support for a cause in digital space is one way in which citizens engage in public matters (Micheletti & McFarland, 2011). Besides, such an approach has been used in a study of development assistance in Spain, providing evidence of different communities on Facebook, which can be divided into a religious group made of NGOs linked to Catholi-

Table 1. Indicators selected for operationalisation and data sources

Dimension	Justification	Operationalisation	Indicator and type of variable	Source
Leadership	<p>Leadership is a major element of the capacity of NGOs, as they tend to face complex managerial problems (Edwards, 1999; Fowler, 1997). Although leadership can be considered mostly in the physical domain, it was increasingly recognised that online presence is also becoming crucial for public engagement (Narbona, 2016).</p> <p>Leadership has been mentioned in Light’s framework (2004), as <i>board leadership</i> (Brown, Andersson, & Jo, 2016), and <i>senior management team leadership</i> (Andersson et al., 2016).</p>	<p>To recognise the growing importance of social media, leadership will be interpreted as “digital leadership”, which means presence in professional social media. To measure this concept, the organisation leaders’ number of contacts on LinkedIn and followers on Twitter were used. LinkedIn and Twitter were selected due to the fact that contrary to Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, they are mostly used for professional, rather than personal, purposes (Papacharissi, 2009).</p>	1. Number of the organisation leader’s followers on Twitter (discrete variable)	Twitter
			2. Number of people in an organisation’s leader’s network on LinkedIn (discrete variable)	LinkedIn
Structures and procedures	<p>Structures and procedures in any organisation determine the level of management in the organisation. This dimension corresponds with different terms used to describe this dimension in other studies: <i>structural</i> (Hall et al., 2003), <i>infrastructure and planning</i> and <i>planning and development</i> (Doherty et al., 2013), <i>strategy and planning</i> (Andersson et al., 2016), <i>internal structure</i> (Light et al., 2004), and <i>physical assets</i> (Brown et al., 2016).</p>	<p>Three indicators have been used to operationalise this dimension: having a clearly organisational structure published on a website, the possibility for users to interact on the website was also taken into account (e.g. the possibility of asking questions); and finally, publication of financial reports. It should be noted that some entities, due to their legal form as religious organisations, were not obliged follow this rule. For each of the mentioned elements, 0 or 1 point was awarded.</p>	1. Indication of the function in the organisational structure (binary variable)	WWW
			2. The ability to interact with the user on the website (binary variable)	WWW
			3. Financial statement of the organisation (binary variable)	WWW

Table 1. Continuation

Resources	<p>Resources are a fundamental dimension of the capacity of any organisation and come in different forms. It is important to note a relational aspect of resources: financial resources determine NGOs' ability to invest in human and physical resources (Christensen and Gazley, 2008).</p> <p>This dimension corresponds with <i>human and financial resources</i> (Hall et al., 2003), <i>human resources</i> and <i>finance</i> (Doherty et al., 2013), <i>human resources</i> and <i>fund development</i> (Andersson et al., 2016), and <i>financial assets and human capital</i> (Brown et al., 2016).</p>	Human resources include the number of people declaring cooperation on LinkedIn (a) (1)	1. Number of people declaring cooperation on LinkedIn (discrete variable)	LinkedIn
		Financial resources include not only organisations' financial resources, but also their assets. Therefore, the experience in conducting development projects has been treated as an asset and operationalised as number (2), value (3) and location diversity (4) of projects (b). Moreover, incomes from statutory activity (c) (5) and 1% of tax donation (6) was also included.	2. Number of projects in Africa funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (discrete variable)	
			3. Total value of projects in Africa funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (continuous variable)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
			4. Number of countries in Africa in which projects funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were implemented (discrete variable)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
			5. Organisation's income from statutory activity (continuous variable)	WWW
			6. Organisation's income from 1% of income tax (continuous variable) ¹	Ministry of Finance

¹The Polish tax system allows tax payers to award 1% of their tax payments to the charitable organisation of their choice.

Table 1. Continuation

Stakeholder relations	<p>Another important source are stakeholder relations – not only decision-makers, but also regular supporters.</p> <p>This dimension corresponds with <i>relationship and network capacity</i> (Hall et al., 2003), <i>external relationships</i> (Doherty et al., 2013), <i>marketing and communications</i> (Andersson et al., 2016), and <i>social capital</i> (Brown et al., 2016).</p>	<p>The strength of connections with international organisations can be assessed through implementation of projects funded by foreign donors (1). Relations with other NGOs were operationalised as the number of NGO board members who also sit on the boards of other organisations.</p> <p>In terms of relations with a broader public, Facebook likes (3) and people involved in discussion have been taken as a proxy (4).</p> <p>To describe the structure of the Facebook network, three basic measures of social network analysis have been adopted: centrality degree (5), betweenness (6) and closeness (7). Centrality degree indicates how many connections one node has. Betweenness degree indicates nodes that serve as bridges in the network. Closeness degree indicates nodes that have the shortest paths to all other nodes in a network.</p>	1. Implementation of projects funded by international donors (binary variable)	WWW
			2. Number of institutional connections of members of the boards with other organisations (discrete variable)	National Court Register
			3. Number of likes on Facebook profile (discrete variable)	Facebook
			4. Number of people involved in discussion on Facebook profile (discrete variable)	Facebook
			5. Centrality degree in the network (continuous variable)	Facebook
			6. Betweenness in the network (continuous variable)	Facebook
			7. Closeness degree in the network (continuous variable)	Facebook
Products	<p>Products are understood as outreach tools and services that help address mission-related needs.</p> <p>This dimension corresponds with <i>infrastructure and process capacity</i> (Hall et al., 2003), <i>infrastructure</i> (Doherty, Misener and Cuskelly, 2013), <i>marketing and communications</i> (Andersson, Faulk and Stewart 2016) and <i>programme and services</i> (Brown et al., 2016).</p>	<p>Publishing reports on a specific topic (1) or participation in the conferences or advocacy events (2) were used to operationalise this dimension.</p>	1. Publications of own reports (binary variable)	WWW
			2. Organisation of own events or conferences (binary variable)	WWW

It should be noted that LinkedIn is not a typical social media for religious organisations; yet a substantial group involved in the organisations' work see their work as a volunteering contribution.

(a) Limiting oneself to development projects may be a certain generalisation, especially since some organisations implement numerous projects as part of volunteering and humanitarian aid or other grants.

(b) In the case of financial statements, it should be pointed out that not all organisations publish their annual reports and only part of them can receive 1% of income tax. For these organisations, these variables were excluded from the average measure of resources.

Table 2. Capacity of the Polish developmental NGOs according to the Antlöv and Brinkerhoff integrated systemic framework (2010)

LP	Organisation	[a]	[b]	[c]	[d]	[e]	[f]
1	Christian Charity Services	-	0.74	0.19	0.33	1.00	0.45
2	Ad Gentes	-	0.81	0.11	0.15	0.50	0.31
3	European Meeting Centre – Nowy Staw Foundation	-	1.00	0.02	0.16	1.00	0.44
4	Wayair Foundation	0.37	0.67	0.02	0.04	-	0.22
5	Foundation Article 25	-	0.74	-	0.03	-	0.15
6	Foundation for Somalia	-	0.45	0.08	0.54	0.50	0.31
7	Economic Foundation – Poland – Eastern Africa	-	0.13	0.01	0.01	-	0.03
8	Innovaid Foundation	0.30	0.35	0.18	0.17	-	0.20
9	Kiabakari Foundation	-	0.43	0.23	0.14	-	0.16
10	Cultures of the World Foundation	0.41	0.75	0.31	0.25	1.00	0.54
11	Foundation Science for Development	0.03	0.70	0.05	0.09	1.00	0.37
12	Foundation Partners Polska	0.22	0.93	0.38	0.12	0.50	0.43
13	Polish Centre for International Aid	0.57	0.80	0.49	0.34	1.00	0.64
14	Foundation Redemptoris Missio	-	1.00	0.01	0.18	-	0.24
15	Young Businessman Club	0.01	0.06	0.01	0.06	-	0.03
16	Polish Humanitarian Action	0.50	0.97	0.45	0.69	1.00	0.72
17	Salesian Voluntary Service – Youth for the World	-	0.93	0.39	0.13	0.50	0.39
18	Navegadores Society	0.14	0.42	0.06	0.05	0.50	0.24
19	Polish Medical Mission	0.12	0.90	0.29	0.37	0.50	0.44
20	Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network	-	0.55	0.01	0.06	0.50	0.22

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of data sources described in Table 1.

[a] Leadership [b] Structures and procedures [c] Resources [d] Stakeholder relations [e] Products [f] Synthetic indicator.

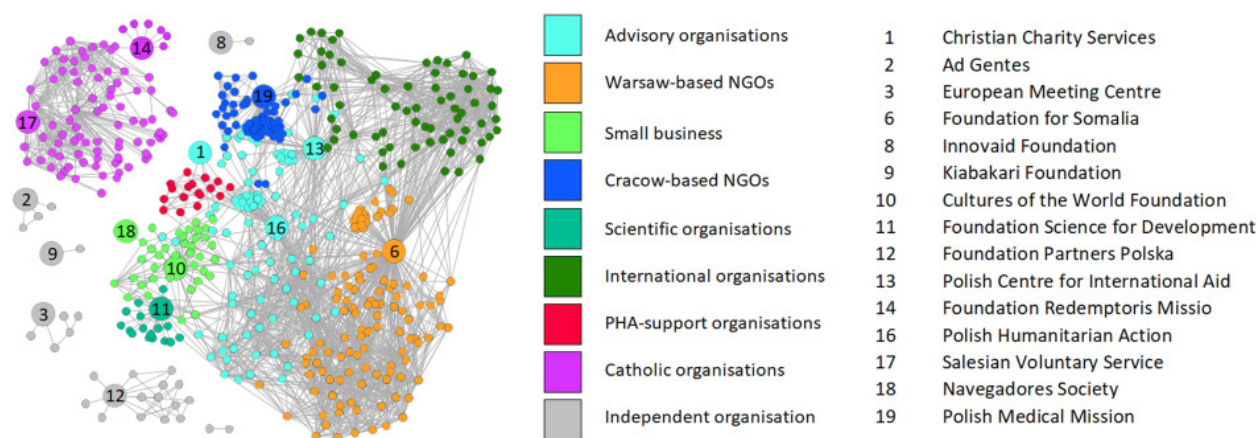


Fig. 1. Polish non-governmental organisations involved in Polish Development Cooperation [a]

Source: own elaboration based on the Facebook data extracted through the Netvizz application,

[a] Network generated 28th March 2018. Modularity = 0.582. Resolution: 1.0. Number of communities: 15. We excluded organisations without Facebook profiles as of 28.03.2018 (Foundation Article 25, Association of Polish Green Network Associations, Economic Foundation Poland – East Africa) and organisations without a link to the organisations (Wayair Foundation, Young Businessman Club). It should be emphasised that some assignments are indicative and result from the adopted classification methodology (for example, the Cultures of the World Foundation was included as a “small business” because it has many connections with it, which does not mean that it has such a profile).

cism and Jesuit NGOs, and a group of more left-wing, secular organisations (Saulière, Abellán, Díez & González, 2016).

Data were extracted through the Netvizz 1.45 application (Rieder, 2013), which allows the construction of an SNA graph. The “Page like network” module was used to create a network of NGO pages connected through the “likes” between them. To enrich the network of connections, two-level crawling was used. This step made it possible to see the broader context of the networks, i.e. the relations of organisations that have direct relations with a given NGO. This, in turn, made it possible to significantly expand the circle of connections and create a more comprehensive landscape of entities interested in the development cooperation. Individual networks were clustered into one graph using the Gephi program and OpenOrd transformation (Martin, Brown, Klavans & Boyack, 2011). Thus, it can be said that Facebook data have been used in two ways. Firstly, they allowed the measurement of one dimension of capacity (relations) using basic SNA indicators (degree centrality, betweenness and closeness). Secondly, the SNA graph mapped different types of environments in which NGOs are embedded.

The approach adopted in this study enabled us to assess the capacities of Polish NGOs implementing projects in Africa using publicly available data. However, it has several limitations. Firstly, the construction of a synthetic indicator includes the inherent subjective perceptions of the authors. Secondly, despite the fact that the integrated systemic framework has the advantages mentioned above, quantitative data available in public repositories in Poland do not cover all the aspects of capacity that may be critical to their assessment, such as number of people hired on employment contracts.

4. Results

In this section, the results corresponding with the respective dimensions of NGO capacity are described. The SNA graph was discussed in detail in *Discussion*, as it shows a broader network of relations in which a given organisation operates.

Most of the NGO leaders were not present on social media. The most active individuals were: Wojciech Wilk of the Polish Center for International Aid and Janina Ochojska of Polish Humanitarian Action. The former gained the highest score in terms of LinkedIn presence, and the latter on Twitter. These two leaders have years of field experience in the area of development and humanitarian assistance, as well as established contacts with international organisations. The leaders of religious organisations tended to ignore Twitter and LinkedIn.

The results concerning structures and procedures suggest that 55% of organisations were identical in terms of transparency (measured by financial statements, although these were not always up to date), professionalism (the list of structures on the website) and inclusivity (giving the opportunity to contact the organisation/ask questions). Two organisations did not meet any transparency measures, which could be related to their vestigial activity in recent years.

In terms of resources, the Polish Center for International Aid and Polish Humanitarian Action again received the highest scores. Third place was taken by Partners Poland. Human resources were the strongest in Polish Humanitarian Action. The highest number and value of projects between 2010 and 2018 was implemented by the Polish Center for International Aid, Partners Polska and Kiabakari Foundation (seven projects each). As many as nine organisations implemented only one project in this period. In terms of diversity of project locations, the Salesian Voluntary Mission, the Cultures of the World Foundation and Polish Medical Mission implemented projects in three countries. The highest financial capacities are those of Polish Humanitarian Action, the Polish Center for International Aid and the Christian Charity Service. The latter organisation has the highest support from 1% of tax donations, followed by Polish Humanitarian Action and the Salesian Voluntary Mission.

As for relations, almost 30% of organisations funded their projects with the help of international donors, including the European Union and United Nations. The analysis of connections through the National Court Register has shown a surprising configuration of density of networks. Whilst the first place is taken by Polish Humanitarian Action, the

next positions are taken by Foundation Redemptoris Missio and the European Meeting Centre – Nowy Staw Foundation. The unquestionable leader in Facebook popularity is Polish Humanitarian Action, which is the only organisation that had more than 100,000 likes. The Polish Center for International Aid, the Salesian Voluntary Mission and the Polish Medical Mission took the next places. The best networked organisation (measured by centrality degree) is the Foundation for Somalia, followed by the Polish Centre for Development Aid, the Polish Medical Mission, Polish Humanitarian Action and the Cultures of the World Foundation.

In terms of products, 30% of NGOs published reports and organised events. Eight organisations published reports and eleven organised and attended different kinds of events. According to the results, the Polish Centre for Development Aid, Polish Humanitarian Action, the Cultures of the World Foundation, the Christian Charity Service, the European Meeting Centre – Nowy Staw Foundation, and the Science for Development Foundation received the highest scores. Of all organisations, 35% did not deliver any type of products.

5. Discussion

According to the approach to capacity proposed in this analysis, the ability of NGOs to provide development aid in Africa is determined by their commitment to a long-term vision, strength of leadership, structures, resources, stakeholder relations, and the ability to propose broader activities that go beyond the pure project implementation. The quantitative analysis of factors that make up the capabilities of Polish NGOs implementing development projects in Africa presents some conclusions that have rarely been highlighted in previous publications on this subject.

The analysis suggests that organisations have very different capacities. Whilst two organisations, Polish Humanitarian Action and the Polish Center for International Aid, can be described as champions of the Polish development aid in Africa, the others seem to form a separate and diversified cluster. The two leading organisations have a long track record of activity and strong leaders who have been work-

ing in this role from the very beginning of their careers, stronger ties to international entities, and the ability to mobilise foreign funding and employ locally-based staff. When it comes to the thematic scope of the projects, it seems that development activities are the domain of the Polish Center for International Aid rather than Polish Humanitarian Action. In the period 2010–2018, Polish Humanitarian Action implemented only one project in Kenya under the Polish Development Aid Programme, while the Polish Center for International Aid implemented projects in Ethiopia and Kenya. Despite the annual nature of the financing cycle, this organisation managed to maintain the continuity of these projects. Moreover, of these two, only the Polish Center for International Aid implemented development projects outside of Africa, while Polish Humanitarian Action is more focused on humanitarian aid.

The remaining organisations constitute a diversified group. Among the three top organisations, two are secular NGOs and one is a Catholic organisation. Within this group, secular organisations have relatively equal structures. When it comes to resources, the number of people declaring their affiliation to the NGOs on LinkedIn does not adequately encompass the issue of volunteers. Their role in the NGOs' capacity building has been a topic of other studies (Devereux, 2008; Svensson, Hancock & Hums, 2017). Although estimating the contribution of unpaid workers to an NGO is not the topic of this study, it is worth highlighting that numerous organisations in this sector are likely to rely on them for development projects, as is the case in the whole third sector in Poland (Charycka & Gumkowska, 2019). Moreover, there is a tendency in this group to diversify the scope of activities: apart from implementing projects in Africa, part of NGOs' work takes place in Poland and is related to the promotion of civil society, social inclusion, global education, mediation, and support for refugees and migrants, children and youth, ecology, or even the provision of medical care. Their overall organisational capacity arises from the ability to mobilise funds for different social projects, not necessarily those in Africa. When it comes to thematic scope, compared to organisations working in the Eastern Partnership countries (see Pospieszna & Galus, 2018), NGOs implementing projects in Af-

rica are focused on service delivery, and not on governance-related issues. Such a focus can partially be explained by the priorities of the Multiannual Development Plan 2016–2020.

On the other hand, there are two organisations that function in a different way: the Young Businessmen Club, the East Africa Economic Foundation and Navegadores. This last organisation is an interesting case that combines integration trips for private companies with development activities carried out by their employees in Africa. There are also cases of young organisations (InnovAid and WayAir Foundation), which due to their relatively short period of activity cannot achieve the same scores in this approach. Finally, the case of the Kiabakari Foundation, which continuously worked on the same project in successive years, shows that a broader development undertaking in one location can also be an alternative strategy for working in Africa. This alternative approach, however, is not appropriately encompassed by the proposed operationalisation.

It is noteworthy that Polish NGOs use international funding to a limited extent (Charycka & Gumkowska, 2019). Apart from the two champions that are able to mobilise external resources from the European Union or United Nations, the others relied on limited state funding, as well as on 1% tax donations or public fundraising. The issue of annual financing of Polish organisations has frequently been raised by policy evaluations (Bienias et al., 2016), advocacy organisations (Kozek et al., 2016), and academic studies (Chimiak, 2016). Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made it possible in recent years to fund projects as part of a modular form, NGOs voice the opinion that it was not a formula that ultimately solved the problem of financing multiannual projects (Kozek et al., 2016). Additionally, the double accountability of religious organisations to the church and to the state hinders a more precise assessment of the funds at their disposal. On the other hand, there is a strong tendency in one Catholic organisation – the Salesians – to accustoming itself to the organisational model of secular entities in terms of structures (i.e. by having people responsible for public relations) and resources. This seems to confirm the findings of other studies (Fagan, 2004; Henderson, 2002; Sperling, 1999)

that organisations tend to converge to the models preferred by donors.

An innovative element of this study was the social network analysis of Facebook data that has shown a clear division between secular and religious organisational networks, a phenomenon that is neglected in studies devoted to development aid in Central and Eastern Europe. The Catholic network, as presented on Graph 1, comprises 16.5% of all organisations, while the secular network constitutes 77.6%. It is important to note that the Facebook site of no Catholic organisation was as liked as any entity in the secular network. This means that these two clusters are very separated, even though they work in the same sector.

The Catholic cluster consists of two Catholic organisations implementing projects funded by Polish development aid. Although religion has been sidelined in international development for many years (Selinger, 2004), since the beginning of 2000, recognition of religion within development policy and practice has been increasing (Smith, 2017). For example, in Malta, Catholic organisations were involved in the implementation of development projects (Calleja-Ragonesi, Khakee & Pisani, 2014). In the United Kingdom, the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), and later Department for International Development (the successor of ODA) funded organisations such as the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and the Catholic Institute for International Relations, later replaced by Progressio (Clarke, 2006). In Norway, the minister of development launched a project aimed at “taking religion more seriously in Norwegian foreign policy” (Lemvik, 2016: 41). Furthermore, in 2016, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development established a secretariat to coordinate activities dealing with religion and development. Among multilateral organisations, UNFPA engaged with religious organisations registered with the UN (UNFPA, 2008). The World Bank established a Joint Learning Initiative to document the role of religion in development (Lemvik, 2016). Although Catholic organisations share many characteristics with their secular counterparts, there are two factors that set them apart. Firstly, they are motivated by faith, and secondly, the rationale for their activity goes beyond development concerns (Ferris, 2005). Although there are no studies on how reli-

gion relates to these NGOs' capacities, religion is becoming a vital element of development aid within policy circles.

In Poland, Catholic organisations have been playing a crucial role in development aid delivery in Africa. The presence in multiple locations of Polish missionaries who are relatively active in aid delivery and who could serve local entities for further engagement with the African region is a serious advantage over other Central and Eastern European countries (Kopiński, 2012). The results show that relationships between secular and religious hubs are intermittent. Polish religious organisations involved in state-funded development aid are different from secular ones for two reasons. Firstly, contrary to the majority of secular organisations, many missionaries have had long-standing positions in recipient countries, which only reinforces the above-mentioned argument presented by Kopiński (2012). This experience significantly supported their overall capacity to realise social projects in a culturally and socially different environment. Secondly, the thematic scope of projects differed between secular and religious actors. The latter group was highly involved in health and education projects, while more entrepreneurial activities are usually the domain of secular organisations. The fact that religious organisations often implement projects in health and education holds true in the literature about faith-based development organisations. For example, missionaries provided healthcare and social services and thus created a basis for modern healthcare in China (Fried, 1987). In their comparison of secular and faith-based organisations in Nigeria, Comfort et al. (2011) found that, while both secular and religious organisations work in HIV/AIDS prevention, they display differences in communication approach. Whilst secular NGOs advocated the use of condoms and emphasised physical aspects and choice, religious organisations used spiritual justifications and stressed abstinence and the importance of family (Comfort et al., 2011).

On the other hand, the secular network is more heterogeneous and has several diversified subgroups (Fin. 1. Graph 1). Among them, it is possible to distinguish organisations related to development assistance in its stricter sense (Polish Centre for International Aid), scientific organisations working in the area of development (Science for Development

Foundation), and also those related to small business activities in tourism, corporate social responsibility or publishers (The Cultures of the World Foundation). Another interesting point is the presence of three sub-groups that can be considered as satellites. These sub-groups are made up of Warsaw- and Cracow-based organisations focusing around the Foundation for Somalia and the Polish Medical Mission, respectively, as well as international organisations with which the Polish Centre for International Aid and Polish Humanitarian Action are most closely networked. In addition to these two networks, several organisations function independently. They are poorly involved in social media or less often cooperate with other entities. On the periphery of the secular group was also the Christian Charity Service, contacting neutral world-view websites such as ngo.pl.

The capacities of Polish NGOs to implement development projects in Africa, and thereby further Polish development policy goals, should be seen in a broader context. As the main tools in implementing development policy in Africa, they depend heavily for their activities on the state as a financial source. Even in the case of the two champions, the reliance on state funds is much greater than the support from international organisations and private fundraising. Of the twenty NGOs with which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperated in 2018, religious organisations were a significant constituency. Given their long-term presence on the ground and the ability to access non-state resources that are not systematically documented, missionaries can be seen as crucial actors in the provision of development aid.

6. Conclusions

In this paper we explored the capacities of NGOs implementing Polish development policy goals in Africa using a quantitative approach. The contribution of this paper is three-fold. Firstly, it provided the overall picture of development NGOs in Poland on the basis of available data. Secondly, it used social network analysis, which had not been previously applied in the studies devoted to Polish development NGOs. Thirdly, it revealed a neglect-

ed issue of a dichotomy of religious and secular organisations involved in development aid.

Our study identified two separate polarised groups of Polish NGOs implementing the development policy in Africa. The two champions seem to derive their capacity from their access to diversified funding sources and strong leaders. The dichotomy between secular and religious organisations, as shown by SNA, is another contribution of this study. We argue that due to the double accountability of religious organisations and the consequent undocumented issues around them, it is not possible to assess their full capacity to contribute to development aid delivery.

There are several additional research questions that are worth consideration in future studies. Firstly, there remains a considerable need for future research enhancing a contextual understanding of capacity, which appears to be crucial for broader discussion of the role of non-governmental organisations in development policy. Secondly, the question of the capacity of religious organisations could be investigated in the future, and thereby contribute to the academic debate about the role of religion in the sector of development. Thirdly, it is important to explore the functioning of organisations that are not funded by the state and that deliver development aid to Africa, such as private entities delivering development projects independently in various locations in Africa. Findings from these types of studies will help contribute towards a more nuanced understanding of NGO capacity in Poland.

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