



Project “Model of Activation of Local Communities and the IT Tools with use of Co-Design (MASIT_COD)” – executive summary

MASIT_COD research phase

This summary presents the results of research carried out under the project “Model of Activation of Local Communities and the IT Tools with use of Co-Design” (MASIT_COD). The project was co-financed by the grant from The National Centre for Research and Development (<http://www.ncbir.pl/en/>) in the framework of the “Social Innovations” programme and carried out by Life Quality Cluster – „Podkarpacie Country” and its partners: University of Rzeszów, Nomino Ltd, and KlasterPro.pl Ltd. The area of the Project in the research phase consisted of five subregions of the Podkarpacie province in the south-eastern Poland: Lubaczów, Przemyśl, Ropczyce-Sędziszów, Rzeszow, and Strzyżów.

The research phase of the project consisted of both: quantitative and qualitative research.

The activities carried out in the research phase included:

1. The quantitative study, carried out among residents of subregions mentioned above with use of the *Paper & Pen Personal Interview* technique (PAPI), aimed at diagnosing the endogenous resources of social and human capital which can be used for activation of local communities.
2. The quantitative study, carried out among business representatives with use of the *Computer Assisted Telephone Interview* technique (CATI), aimed at diagnosing the possibility of mutual influence on each other necessary to trigger the endogenous resources of local communities.
3. The desk research study aimed at conducting an inventory of the resources of the (tangible and intangible) cultural capital occurring in the five subregions covered by the scope of the Project.
4. Qualitative study, carried out among representatives of local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other local community leaders, with use of the *Focus Group Interview* technique (FGI) and the panel of experts, which was aimed at deepening the previously gathered knowledge, verifying the ideas developed in the course of above mentioned research





and the dissemination of the project ideas and propositions among the local leaders and experts.

More information about the project is available on the webpage: www.kraina-podkarpacie.pl/projekty

“Rediscovery” of the regions

Over the past decade we have witnessed a steady growth of interest in regional studies and in the economic development of regions, which have become key players in the knowledge and service economy. This “rediscovery” of the regions has its profound implications for social and economic policies both of individual countries and the whole uniting Europe. European Union promotes a policy of decentralization aimed at strengthening the regional economies through an increase in its productivity and innovation. Another consequence of growing interest in regions is rising growth of regional studies and research projects, focusing both on the issue of the conceptualization of the region and related concepts, as well as on the search for methodological approaches best for the description and explanation of the regional phenomena (Sagan, 2004, 25). To this subject also fits a reference to the theory of human capital and social capital and their role in regional development.

Discussion about the work including regional science the fundamental factors affecting the competitiveness of the region usually include: human capital, broadly defined infrastructure and social capital. These three factors are usually sufficient to implement a highly competitive economy. Their co-occurrence gives a very good chance of successful pace of development of the region. Often raised in the scientific literature issue of “developed and diversified economic structure” as a factor of competitiveness of the region, is more important to measure competitiveness in terms of statistic than a factual factor allowing for the building up competitiveness. The construction of the region's competitiveness must be understood as a dynamic process aimed at creating a developed and diversified economic structure. The innovative nature of the economy recognised by many authors as one of the most important factors of competitiveness is the result of accumulation of human and social capital as well as a good infrastructure in the region.

Social capital facilitates cooperation within groups and multinational corporations, and strengthens the capabilities of collective action to achieve mutual benefits. In addition, it reinforces





the collective learning process and is a key element of the creation, diffusion and transformation of knowledge, which are essential for innovation and competitiveness. Finally, social capital reinforces the values promoting the networks as a stimuli to create regional clusters and regional innovation strategies and policies. This issue is particularly important for the less developed regions featuring the weaker social capital and weak dissemination of science and knowledge. In such conditions, these regions must face fundamental challenges of technological and social change (Kuklinski, 2003, 9-10). The location of enterprise is no longer the question of proximity of natural resources, the supply of labour or large local market, but access to the right resources of human and social capital. Highlighting the role of intangible forms of capital as a factors of development has become very common in the social sciences in the last two decades. Despite differences between two terms visible at first glance, mainly in the ways how they are used (the concept of “human capital” is often used by economists, and the “social capital” has become the domain of sociologists) both of them moved far beyond the boundaries of their disciplines and are intensively employed by scientists, journalists, politicians and social activists (Kotarski, 2012).

Social activity bringing the effects to the individual and society is primarily consisting of a desire to influence the social environment, to transform it, and constantly evaluate. In practice, social activity should lead to “change the ratio between the adaptive and creative function – in favour of the latter; noticing the social dimension expressed in the creation of interpersonal relationships; replacing the aims based on tasks by the system of values recognised by the individual and community; moving from formal institutions, which are instruments of state policy (administration) to (...) social institutions [associations, foundations, NGOs]; re-evaluating the policy from the model of aims and tasks to model of creating favourable conditions for the individual and group activity; recreating authentic associations; the transition from teaching to counselling and a wide information system” (Turlejska, 1998, 399). Functioning and development of local communities is a complex process, modelled by a wide variety of factors, of which the most vital is level of social activity strongly correlated with professional activity of citizens.

Main objective of the project

Guided by these premises for the main objective of the project we have designated creation and evaluation of a model of activation of local communities and IT tool for the design of products,





services and organizational solutions in sectors including life quality such as: sustainable tourism, health and eco-technologies. An important component of the model is the local representatives of businesses and institutions operating in the three above mentioned sectors. Without their commitment the creation of an effectively functioning model is very difficult. It should be emphasized that misusing of the endogenous resources of less developed, under-industrialised regions cause particularly severe social consequences (poverty, pathology, social exclusion). Local authorities to take effective action for the sake of their communities must have a comprehensive and current knowledge about endogenous resources. Local authorities expect also professional support from scientists and entrepreneurs in designing the activation of citizens of subregions and communities. Local small entrepreneurs (SMEs) in order to compete effectively with external entities need a human capital (competent employees), social capital (co-operation and micro-clusters) and ideas necessary to improve the attractiveness of their products and services. Residents, especially young people, look primarily for job positions, development opportunities, realisation of their ideas and ambitions, and real influence on the processes taking place in the community of their residence. Non-governmental organizations to operate effectively require active community (volunteers), the goodwill of local authorities (support in the implementation of social initiatives) and entrepreneurs (funds).

Bibliography:

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