

INSTRUMENTS FOR MANAGING DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: *In order to secure the proper development strategy, local governments in Poland should use appropriate instruments for strategic management of communities. A successful development, however, cannot exist without the proper identification and the strategic analysis of owned assets. However, development of local governments largely depends on development of subordinate communities. This is why adopting an appropriate approach, as well as active support of the very communities are essential. The aim of the article was twofold. First of all, the authors attempted to classify all the instruments, which may be used to facilitate development of local governments. Secondly, the authors tried to determine if local governments in the Kujawsko-pomorskie region are aware that they have such instruments at their disposal.*

Key words: *strategic analysis, local development, communal activity*

INTRODUCTION

Successful strategic management depends largely on choosing the appropriate instruments, such as methods and techniques, which can guarantee strategic development of an organization, and secure its stable and long-term progress. Another key aspect in strategic management is the decision-making process used by the management. This is why it is vital that local government officers, including mayors and other governors, have adequate management skills, and use strategic management instruments, which allow them to manage local communities successfully. Nevertheless, successful management must be based upon development strategy first. This can be achieved only through a detailed strategic analysis of owned assets, followed carefully monitored evaluation. It should be remembered that the foundation for local development is "harmonized and systematic actions (...) aiming to create and maintain favourable conditions for local economy, accompanied by securing ecological balance in a particular area at the same time." [4] In literature, many authors stress that the major aim of local development is securing jobs and income of citizens. In other words, maintaining a high level of civic wealth is essential for long-term financial and social stability of local communities. [7,9]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Studying some sources from the specialized literature, sources which were mentioned in the biography section, the authors try to identify sources of local activity, and to show appropriate instruments which can be used for strategic analysis. These two elements are necessary in order to formulate the Local Development Strategy. The researchers consulted literature, and, after careful consideration, indicated which areas are critical for efficient operation of local governments, and which tools are going to produce the best results for local development. What is more, five different units of a local government were appointed for a pilot research programme. Several interviews were

carried out in which participants were asked questions regarding instruments used for the strategic analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Functioning of communes vs. regional development

The Polish government passed a law in 1990, defining "community" as a unit of local government, consisting of residents, united by common area and local government. [11] According to the Constitution, a community serves a basic unit in organization of local society. [12]

While serving their duties, communities cater for residents and treat them as clients at the same time. Other features characterizing a community include:

- income they generate cannot be regarded as the measure of success; instead it should be spent on performing projects and achieving new goals,
- evaluation of community performance is a long-term process, and depends on residents' satisfaction,
- the use state-granted funds,
- initiatives aiming at obtaining funds from other, non-government sources, for example the EU grants,
- active participation of residents in the creation and policing of the law [2],

A community must meet numerous criteria which encourage it to:

- design local infrastructure,
- promote economical development,
- manage local production,
- manage nature's resources,
- look after the local market,
- influence the number and quality of provided services,
- manage the land [2]

Communal activity and planning further development

Successful development of a community often means solving local problems and satisfying the residents' needs – both group and individual. The result is the cultural, social and economical development of the whole area. [1]

Bearing in mind that a community should constantly strive to stimulate its economical development, it must outline the development strategy, and clearly define its strategic and operational goals. Naturally, such strategy should include different forms of activity. One of these forms is local economy. In order to use it in the most effective manner, its assets and surroundings must be identified first. Another type of communal activity is the health service with its range of medical services. Maintaining a high level of security promotes social integration among citizens and unites them. Investing in education, and training academic staff is may give communities competitive advantage. The same can be said about promoting culture and recreation. Social security includes numerous initiatives aimed at supporting persons and groups of people who may require help. For example, they may not be fit to work, living alone, people on low income, the unemployed, the sick and disabled, people abusing alcohol, or the homeless. Currently many communities get actively involved in protecting the environment, which significantly lowers the risk of potential ecological disasters. Transportation and communal infrastructure are yet another factor that determines successful development of a community. [5,6,8]

The basic method used to determine the strategic position of community and to formulate its organizational strategy is SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities,

Treats), the universal method used in analysis. "Strengths" are the advantages that make an organization stand out from competition, while "weaknesses" emphasize areas of ill functioning.[10] "Treats" are obstacles such as unforeseen operational costs - external factors inhibiting the operation of an organization. Finally, "Opportunities" denote certain events in the surroundings, which may be used to the organization's advantage, its development or weakening the competition. [3]

Numerous interviews were carried out, which proved that the Community Development Strategy must give a distinct answer the following question: which actions must be undertaken to satisfy citizens' needs.

The respondents confirmed that the following different methods and techniques were used to draw up the strategy:

- a limited SWOT analysis,
- document analysis and problem diagnosis – performed by experts and consultants,
- lectures and discussions presenting new material to experts, consultants and volunteers,
- product presentations and module analyses (working analyses) were used for community authorities and other groups interested in the subject;
- working with documents submitted by consultants - both individual and teams,
- discussion among consultants involved the brainstorming and problem mapping techniques, allowing them to define case studies and collect ideas regarding further economic activity,
- workshops led by experts and consultants prepared for Local Development leaders, allowing them to propose case studies and shortlist priorities;
- questionnaires addressed to entrepreneurs and local leaders regarding possible new directions for entrepreneurs, educating the youth, and giving new vocational skills for the unemployed - led by experts and volunteers,
- statistical analysis of social, economic, demographic, etc. processes,
- discussions among experts and consultants; brainstorming ideas provided by leaders' ideas and questionnaire results; researching possible new directions for entrepreneur activity,

CONCLUSIONS

Bearing in mind how extensive an area communities cover and operate on, it becomes evident that a detailed socio-economic analysis of their situation is required. In order to perform this task, local governments must possess extensive and detailed knowledge regarding the proper application of tools necessary to perform strategic planning. What is more, sharing knowledge about the proper use of statistical data and quality management is equally important. It allows to measure the effects while the strategy is still being implemented, and they provide context to understand certain phenomena. It should be observed that statistical data and indicators are closely correlated with the SWOT analysis of possible advantages and disadvantages, and the prospect-risk evaluation.

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