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Local Economic Development Planning Tools: from Subjective to Objective Ones

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Abstract

In the present study, the authors analyse and summarise the information that should be available from information systems of the government, municipalities and private sector to create new decision making tools. These instruments are basically related to the existing data collection and analysis at the lowest development planning level – the village, neighbourhood and community.

Keywords: sustainable development, community development, data analysis, Smart City planning

Introduction

Over the past decades after regaining of independence of the Republic of Latvia, significant changes have occurred in the country's development. The democratic country has been developing, by establishing a new legislative framework to contribute to national development, as well as devoting major efforts to the development of civil society. Land development and use of local resources are planned at different administrative territorial levels, but in recent years the issue has been raised about the need for the lowest planning level – the village and the community.

In the present study, the authors analyse and summarise the information that should be available from information systems of the government, municipalities and private sector to create new decision making tools. These instruments are basically related to the existing data collection and analysis at the lowest development planning level – the village, neighbourhood and community.

Methodology of Research

To achieve the goal of the study, the authors have used the analytical and comparative method for the examination of the current situation as well as the induction method to ensure that the results obtained contribute to drawing general conclusions.

Findings and Results

So far, practical experience, regulatory framework, as well as spatial development planning guidelines have focused on statistical data and direct public involvement (surveys, meetings, etc.) in decision making. In the Latvian context, this approach has serious shortcomings:

- a) The national statistical information is often available only at national, regional levels, or in some cases at the municipal level, but municipalities, in general, do not have the resources and expertise for long-term storage of data on villages, neighbourhoods or communities;
- b) The community's direct involvement is often limited by opinion making and generalisation of a particular group that is most often negatively minded.

The above-mentioned approaches to decision making are essentially considered to be subjective and do not analyse a wide diversity of opinion as well as practical resources and circumstances. At the same time, the government, municipalities and the private sector have a huge amount of data, which, if used correctly and analysed appropriately, would allow creating new tools for objective development planning decision making.

Conclusions

The main conclusions of the study are related to the fact that virtually there is no need for new data storage, but many objective decisions can be taken within the framework of the existing information stored. The use of such information would enable Latvia to start implementing the Smart City concept in smaller

cities and towns more efficiently using existing resources, at the same time ensuring multi-dimensional sustainable development.

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